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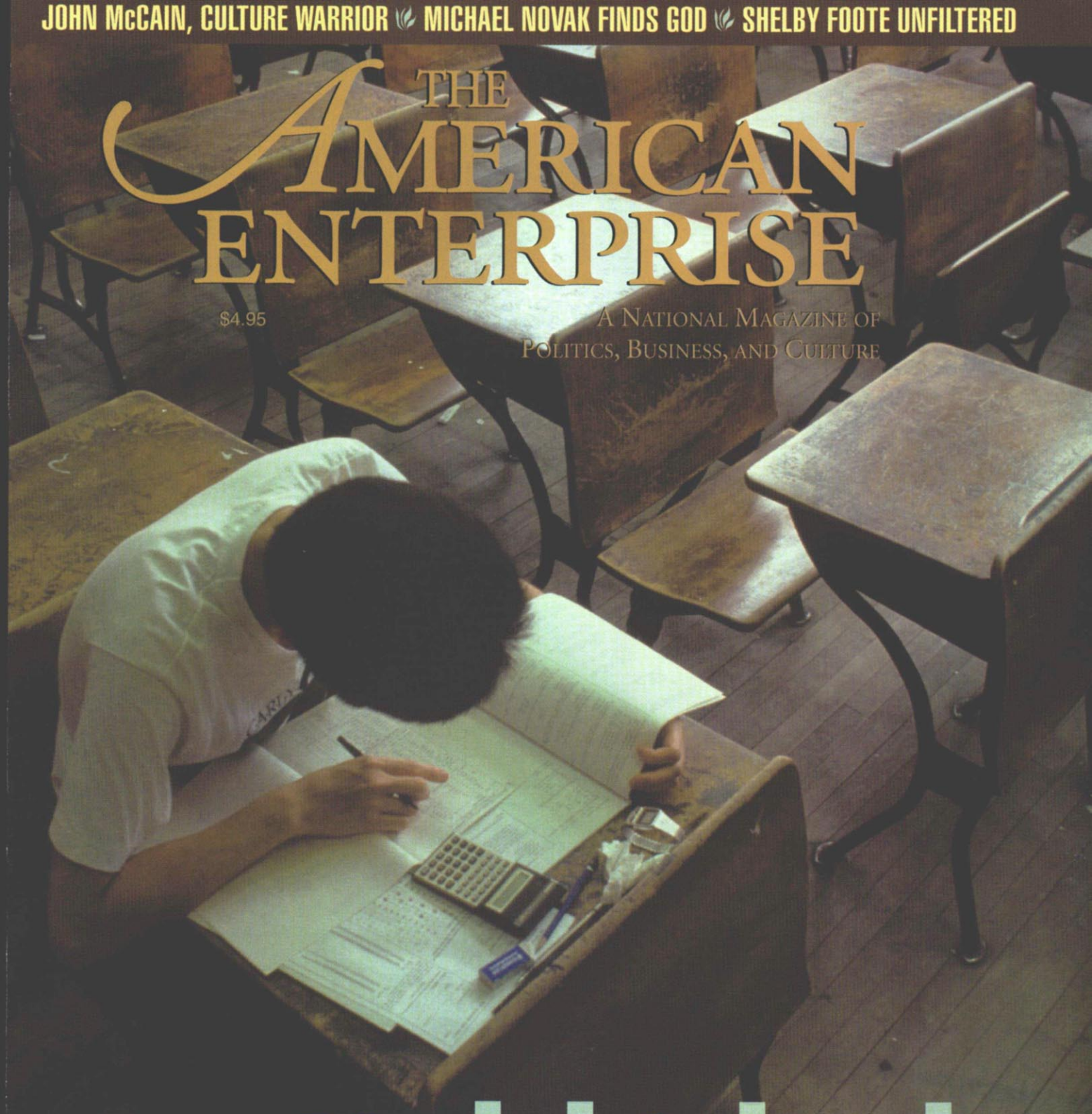

Model Schools

14 Academies Where Kids Really Learn

Volume 12, Number 1

January/February 2001

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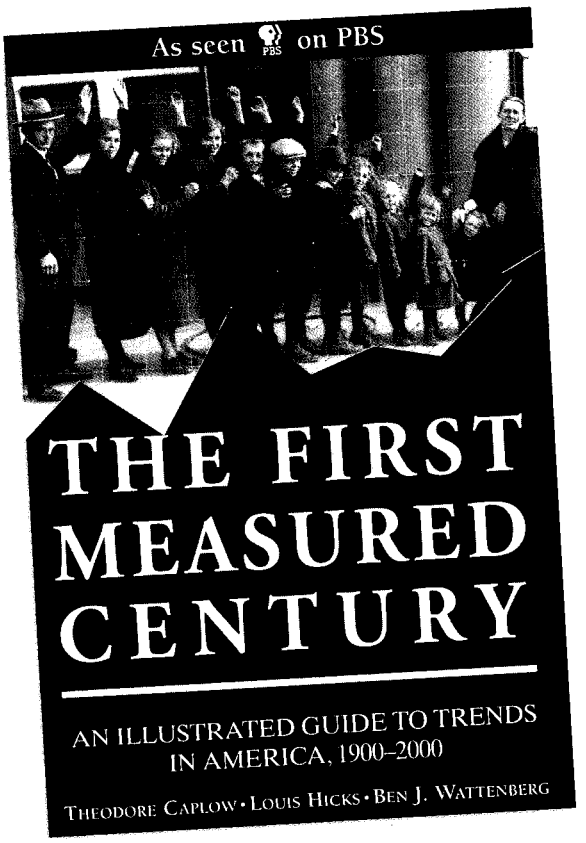

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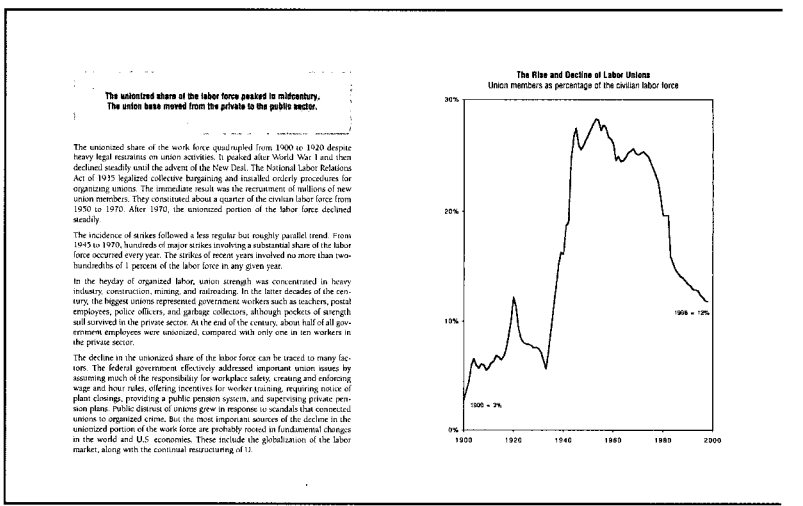
The unionized share of the labor force peaked in midcentury. The union base moved from the private to the public sector.

The unionized share of the work force quadrupled from 1900 to 1920 despite heavy legal restraints on union activities. It peaked after World War I and then declined steadily until the advent of the New Deal. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 legalized collective bargaining and installed orderly procedures for organizing unions. The immediate result was the recruitment of millions of new union members. They constituted about a quarter of the civilian labor force from 1950 to 1970. After 1970, the unionized portion of the labor force declined steadily.

The incidence of strikes followed a less regular but roughly parallel trend. From 1945 to 1970, hundreds of major strikes involving a substantial share of the labor force occurred every year. The strikes of recent years involved no more than two-hundredths of 1 percent of the labor force in any given year.

In the heyday of organized labor, union strength was concentrated in heavy industry, construction, mining, and railroading. In the latter decades of the century, the biggest unions represented government workers such as teachers, postal employees, police officers, and garbage collectors, although pockets of strength still survived in the private sector. At the end of the century, about half of all government employees were unionized, compared with only one in ten workers in the private sector.

The decline in the unionized share of the labor force can be traced to many factors. The federal government effectively addressed important union issues by assuming much of the responsibility for workplace safety, creating and enforcing wage and hour rules, offering incentives for worker training, requiring notice of plant closings, providing a public pension system, and supervising private pension plans. Public distrust of unions grew in response to scandals that connected unions to organized crime. But the most important sources of the decline in the unionized portion of the work force are probably rooted in fundamental changes in the world and U.S. economies. These include the globalization of the labor market, along with the continual restructuring of U

The Rise and Decline of Labor Unions
Union members as percentage of the civilian labor force
30%
20%
10%
0%
1900 = 3%
1908 = 12%
1900
1920
1940
1960
1980
2000

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ER SEEN IT...

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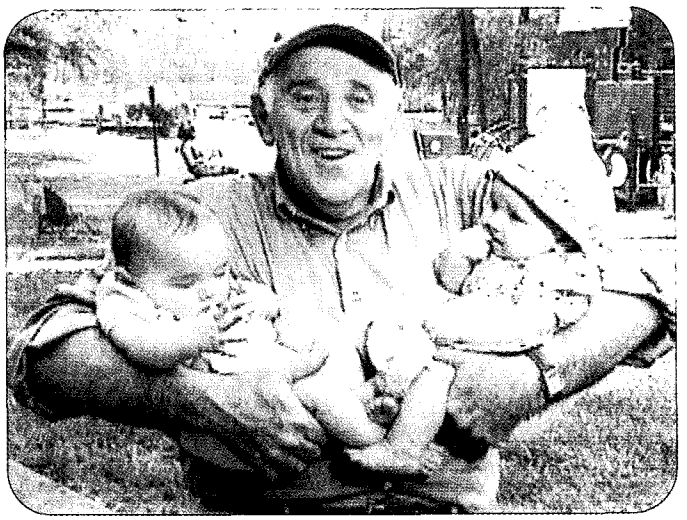
THE FIRST MEASURED CENTURY

THE OTHER WAY OF LOOKING AT AMERICAN HISTORY

The twentieth century is now a finished chapter in human history. What is worth remembering? A thousand tales of heroism and hardship, to be sure: Lindbergh and the Titanic, the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression, the world wars and Vietnam. But there are more than just stories and anecdotes; the last hundred years also saw the rise of social science, which offers a new way of telling America's story. The twentieth century was truly the first measured century, a time when the disparate activity of human life came to be seen as quantifiable and people set out to change the world using data.

"The First Measured Century" is a three-hour PBS documentary that explores the trends that defined twentieth-century America, focusing on the stories of those who did the measuring, their triumphs and failures, and the burning controversies they started. From Julia Lathrop's data-driven crusade to reduce infant mortality, to George Gallup's bold wager that put the public opinion poll on the front page forever, to Daniel Patrick Moynihan's controversial analysis of the breakdown of the black family, "The First Measured Century" demonstrates how public policy came to be driven by numbers.



Among those interviewed are Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Betty Friedan, Milton Friedman, Paul Volcker, William Julius Wilson, Glenn Lowry, Francis Fukuyama, James Q. Wilson, Daphne Spain, Alan Brinkley, George Gallup Jr., Staughton Lynd, and Seymour Martin Lipset.

Join host-essayist Ben Wattenberg for a look at history as you've never seen it.

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—Sandra Heberer, Director, News and Information Programming, PBS

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THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

A NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF POLITICS, BUSINESS, AND CULTURE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2001 VOL. 12, NO. 1

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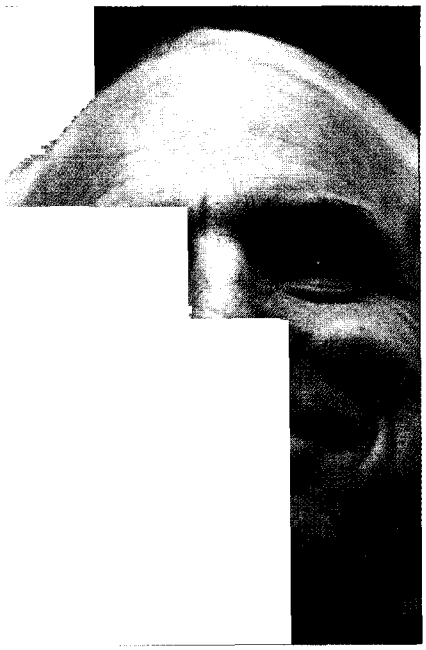

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Behind-the-scenes profiles of 14 dramatically varied schools with one big thing in common: Their students learn. Now these institutions can teach the rest of us something about producing educated and honorable young Americans.

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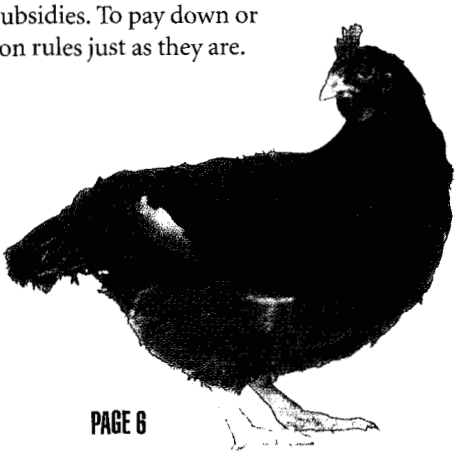

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Bird's Eye

Karl Zinsmeister

The Deep Secrets of Good Schools

Americans tell pollsters that improving schools is just about their highest public priority today. Yet there is no consensus on the best way to do this. People are profoundly uncertain of how to judge the scads of faddish educational reforms now in circulation. One of the most constructive things that can be done to improve education, therefore, is simply to observe successful schools in practice. What exactly does each offer to students? Why do they work while others fail?

For more than a year now, we've been doing just this sort of observation for you. Our investigators have visited schools from California to Connecticut, and Michigan to Mississippi. In the pages that follow, you'll find 14 intriguing profiles of schools that truly teach. Collectively, they can tell us a lot about what poor-to-middling schools (and there are far more of these in our land than you may realize) ought to be doing that they aren't.

The schools you're about to tour vary enormously—they include public, private, charter, and for-profit schools, a Catholic school and a Jewish school, a military academy, rural boarding schools, big-city schools, schools that are mostly black, others that are mostly white, elementary schools and high schools. We emphatically did not seek institutions that turn out all Harvard students. The nation doesn't want many more Harvard graduates; the nation wants a mix of perspectives, skills, and training. Our profiles are of schools that produce disciplined, striving, competent graduates ready to contribute to America in one of the thousands of ways our country needs help—whether through academic pursuits, commercial creativity, diligent military service, or just plain good character and decent citizenship.

We picked schools that do a lot with what they are handed at the start. Obviously a school packed with doctors' kids will produce high SAT scores. Big deal. What we looked for were institutions that make strong forward progress given the human potential they begin with—advancing children as far as possible from where they entered in intellect and character.

As much as they differ, it's extremely interesting how many common traits are shared by the successful schools we profile. A remarkably similar basic formula applies in almost all of these places: high demands on students, strict discipline, a strong and unapologetic moral component, including a respect for religion, an emphasis on teaching intellectual basics, a preference for time-tested books and curricula, clear standards of dress, grooming, and comportment, and an insistence on politeness, respect, and courtesy.

And one other thing: most of these schools are comparatively "hard." They push kids, and demand effort. That alone distinguishes them from many other U.S. schools. In an article in *The Executive Educator*, an Israeli mother named Judith Koren who relocated her two children to one of the best public schools in Westchester County, New York, laments that "at the start of the U.S. school year, my son's sixth-grade class was getting about an hour of homework a day. But after three months, a group of parents complained to the school that their children were overworked.... The teachers cut back on assignments." She concludes that "no one expects very much of American kids," and warns this is why U.S. students often test lower than foreign counterparts. Arriving from Israel, Koren reports, "my sixth-grader was a full year ahead of his classmates in mathematics, and my third-grader—who could barely read English on arrival—tested only six months below the class average."

So what secret formulas, potent technologies, and rich financing methods do overseas teachers rely on? How do they make learning so much fun for their students? The answer is,

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they don't. The secret ingredient in most successful education is cost free. It is exceedingly low-tech. And it has little to do with fun in the simplest sense. That ingredient is brow sweat.

Koren describes how two British women she knows became effective essayists and speakers. "Each week, they'd had homework exercises like this: While preserving every essential point, reduce a 100-word essay to 50 words, then to 20, then to 10. Reduce 500 words to 50, 1,000 words to 100. Week after week, year after year. A grind? Sure it's a grind. Who said literacy is easy? It takes practice. Few kids want to put in that amount of work. The schools have to demand it." (By the way, anyone trained in this method should contact me immediately—I have a job waiting.)

Though they hardly ever act forcefully on their knowledge, most Americans now understand that their local schools are not demanding enough of their pupils. A national survey funded by the Fordham, Gund, MacArthur, and Olin Foundations just released this fall found that only 9 percent of parents say teachers are putting too much academic pressure on their child. Only 10 percent say their child is getting too much homework. Just 11 percent say their child's school does too much testing.

Queried whether they would support a requirement at their child's school of summer classes for students who can't meet uniform standards, 81 percent of all parents answer yes. More than two-thirds say they would favor harder standards even if their own child were sent to summer school or even held back a grade.

Beneath the big commonalities of high standards and mind-stretching demands, however, the best schools vary widely in classroom practices and educational techniques—as you'll see when you read through our mosaic of profiles. This is to be expected in an undertaking so deeply personal as education.

I learned a lesson in this regard during my early years as a father. One humbling aspect of raising children for me was discovering how much youngsters can differ, even within the same family, and how strong each child's internal predispositions tend to be. Rearing children is not like kayaking, where you point the boat precisely where you want to go; it's more like sailing—you take the prevailing force as a given and simply try to redirect it. If you're good, and lucky, you'll zig-zag your way to about where you'd like to be. But be prepared to roll with the seas.

Every child has peculiar capabilities and needs, and an innate direction of his or her own. Effective schooling, like effective parenting, must begin by acknowledging this reality. Some children are delicate and in need of extra sensitive treatment; others will be ruined without a whip hand. Some students thrive on independent coursework, others desperately need structured days and inspired guidance. Some children are bursting with quirky gifts, others have a fire for competition burning within their breasts, yet others will achieve precisely as much, or as little, as is demanded of them. Some youngsters go through several of these phases at different points in their lives.

Schools must take the differing natures of children into account. To a considerable degree, this is a sorting exercise. There are, to put it simply, certain children who should never darken the door of a military academy, yet others who will blossom *only* in one. When it comes to writing, memorizing, learning languages, pursuing science, absorbing music, obtaining religious training, exploring athletics, there is not strictly *one* answer to educational excellence. Rather there are multiple answers for children of different ages, origins, and temperaments. To reach his maximum potential, the fatherless inner-city boy will sometimes require a different regimen from the rural girl, or the offspring of dual-career suburbanites. (Of course Horace Mann, the father of American public schooling, thought just the opposite—insisting there was one "scientific" method by which all children should be educated.)

LIBERAL ELITES SCORN COOKIE-CUTTER SHOPPING MALLS AND ASSEMBLY-LINE HAMBURGER CHAINS, YET WON'T CRITICIZE THE AUTOMATON BLUNDERINGS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION MONOPOLIES.

Education is a humane undertaking—a people business—and as with other people businesses I suggest what we really need if we're going to succeed is a bloom of competing options. They all need to be serious, demanding, and clear-eyed. And they must share certain universals of truth, common language, joint history, and tradition. But these fundamentals may be pursued through a variety of methods and mechanisms.

It may seem paradoxical to argue that all successful schools share certain basic assumptions while at the same time saying there is no single right way to educate. But after you've read our 14 profiles I think you'll concur. The Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem and the Benjamin Franklin Charter Schools in Arizona could hardly be more different culturally, yet they are educational blood brothers.

Because we need wide choices to suit differing circumstances, we ought to be encouraging competition among schooling alternatives. We should require every school to disclose its results, then let parents and children select the best match for their situation—without pointlessly eliminating alternatives like private or religious schools. As even arch-liberal Brent Staples wrote recently, "the argument that millions of children must have their lives snuffed out by failing schools and incompetent teachers just to keep impregnable the wall between church and state has worn thin in millions of homes, including my own."

The great—and *tragic*—irony is that while education is one of life's undertakings least suited to one-size-fits-all production, America's current system of publicly financed schools is one of the most uniform and monopolized portions of our society. Compare the way we school to the way we provide doctoring, or housing, or even college education.

Our liberal elites love to criticize cookie-cutter shopping malls, standardized highways, and assembly-line hamburger chains. Yet they haven't a word to speak against the automaton blunderings of public education monopolies. For a glimpse of how rich and multi-faceted childhood education could be in a freer world of de-monopolized education, please wander through the classroom doors we open for you starting on page 18.

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SCAN

THREE CHEERS FOR THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

The uproar over votes in Florida had one good effect: After this election, the Electoral College never looked better.

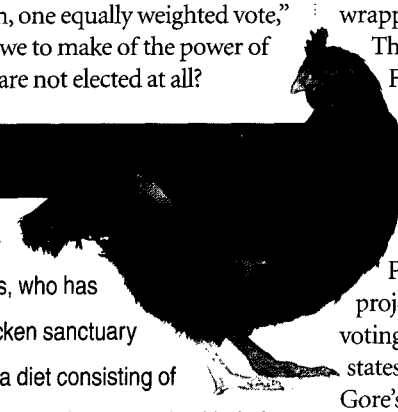
Think what the election would have been like *without* the Electoral College. The raucous scenes in Florida would have broken out in half the states in America. And every close election would paralyze the country for the weeks it takes to tally absentee votes, dispute ballot designs, and on and on.

In 1960, liberal historian Theodore White observed that JFK's victory was "so thin as to be, in all reality, nonexistent." Yet thanks to the Electoral College—and Richard Nixon's statesmanly behavior—Americans weren't divided. Similarly, Bill Clinton received less than half the popular vote both times he ran. In 1860, Lincoln won a mere 40 percent of the popular vote. Yet in all these cases the Electoral College rendered clear victories.

The Electoral College has many continuing benefits. By making each state a distinct prize it causes American campaigning to be waged at a much more local level. It creates a grassroots, human-scale politics, where candidates must show up at pancake suppers in Pennsylvania, town meetings in Iowa, and firemen's carnivals in Oregon. Without the Electoral College, U.S. politics and governance would be much more centralized. Presidential campaigns would be conducted mostly as television events with all the attention focused on the biggest population centers. There would be no regard for the distinctive needs of different regions, for the interests of smaller communities, for minority concerns in specific states.

America has never practiced, or wanted, anything close to pure democracy. If the Electoral College must go (as Hillary Clinton insists), then so must much else, including the U.S. Senate. The requirement that our Constitution only be amended if three-quarters of the states concur (the wisdom of which has been demonstrated many times) is hardly an example of simple majority rule. And, as AEI scholar Walter Berns has noted, if legitimacy in governance "springs only from the principle of one man, one equally weighted vote," then what are we to make of the power of judges—who are not elected at all?

COOP COMMUNISM



Karen Davis has a dream. She left her husband and job as a college professor to become a radical chicken-rights advocate. Davis, who has compared poultry farmers to Nazi commandants, now runs a chicken sanctuary in Virginia where the birds are allowed to roam free. They are fed a diet consisting of their own eggs. This might seem cannibalistic to some, but not to Davis: "I consider it a kind of Marxist-style opportunity to allow them to benefit from the product of their own labor."

NOT DEAD

Amidst the excruciating division in the American electorate today, it appears the Right is holding its own:

- Gore's positions were "too liberal" for 43 percent of the electorate, while 34 percent of voters said Bush's were "too conservative."
- By 51 percent to 44 percent, voters preferred across-the-board tax cuts to targeted tax cuts.
- The percentage of the electorate describing themselves as "conservative" was 29 percent, compared to 20 percent for "liberals."
- The top issue among voters in 2000 was "moral values," and 57 percent said America's moral condition was on the "wrong track."
- Nationwide (as of November 20), the 2,436 counties voting for Bush (overwhelmingly suburban and rural) grew in population by an average of 14 percent over the last decade. In contrast, the 676 (heavily urban) counties Gore carried expanded by just 4 percent. Incidentally, if electoral votes were allotted by current population distributions rather than those of the 1990 census, as they are, George W. Bush would have enjoyed an easy victory.

FIX OUR VOTING SYSTEM

Much of the post-election chaos could have been avoided had national news anchormen kept their big mouths shut early on election night. Instead, they behaved like hyperactive children furiously unwrapping their Christmas gifts a day early.

The networks began projecting a Florida Gore victory at 7:49 p.m. Eastern time, even while residents of ten Panhandle counties were still voting. A GOP-oriented group called Citizens for Honest Politics has sued the networks on behalf of several Panhandle citizens who say the early projection for Gore deterred them from voting in a "decided" election. In other states as well, voters stayed home after Gore's fleeting Florida "win." This likely affected not only the presidential race but also congressional and state-level contests.

Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, their cable counterparts, and the

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executives to whom they report should all apologize to the American people. By jumping the gun and getting Florida wrong—not once, but twice—they triggered an easily-avoided national trauma.

To prevent a replay, Congress and the states should take actions to gird the voting system from future mischief. States should adopt uniform polling hours, with voting booths opening and closing simultaneously all across the Union. News organizations should respect the new, longer voting day (say, 18 hours) and not beg to be regulated by blurting out "results" even as events are unspooling. No possible harm, and much good, would be done if people waited for election results until midnight Eastern Standard Time. Indeed, a whopping 87 percent of Americans tell pollsters they want just that.

Meanwhile, many cities and counties responsible for administering elections say they lack funds for modern voting equipment. This is a rare case where a compelling public purpose justifies additional federal spending. Thus Congress should help local governments purchase state-of-the-art voting machines capable of conducting reliable elections.

Also, since dead people and their crooked enablers ought not choose America's public servants, Congress should mandate that states and cities remove inactive names from their voter rolls, and then require citizens to show photo identification to distinguish legitimate voters from impostors. Imprudently loose absentee, mail, and Internet voting practices and proposals also merit closer scrutiny, given their potential to aid vote fraud.

Finally, a few high-visibility prosecutions of the operators who, for instance, try to bribe homeless people to vote for their candidates, should be undertaken. Shysters who manufacture illicit votes are criminals, and ought not be let off lightly.

America's political class is in complete disrepute right now. Come January, government executives, legislators, and journalists can begin to regain the public's trust by rebuilding a voting system worthy of the electors trust.

—**Deroy Murdock** *is a columnist with the Scripps Howard News Service.*

DOUBLE STANDARD AT THE IRS

Under pressure from liberal politicians and interest groups, the IRS has been attacking conservative churches and religious organizations for a decade now, threatening to revoke their tax-exempt status if they become involved in politics. An evangelical church in upstate New York was given the "death sentence" by the IRS after it ran a newspaper ad questioning Bill Clinton's positions on social issues. More recently, the Christian Coalition was refused tax exempt status by the IRS (though similar groups like the Planned Parenthood Action Fund and the Democratic Leadership Council have had no such trouble).

For some reason, left-wing churches haven't come under the same IRS pressure as conservative congregations. Consider some snapshots from the recent election:

• On October 29, Al Gore campaigned inside Greater Grace Temple, a black church in Detroit. The *Detroit News* reports that pastor Charles Ellis endorsed Gore in his sermon, then presented him with a jacket reading "President Al Gore."

• That same day, Bill Clinton spoke at the Alfred Street Baptist Church in Alexandria, Virginia, to promote Democratic Senate candidate Charles Robb. From the pulpit, Clinton asked congregants to support "a political comrade in arms," according to the *Washington Post.*

• A little earlier, Hillary Clinton appeared at a Bronx church service where the pastor replaced the word "Satan" in one hymn with the word "Lazio" (the *Washington Post*).

The *Citizen Issues Alert* newsletter notes the long tradition of liberal churches getting off scot-free for the same behavior that gets conservative churches in trouble, citing aggressive politicking in favor of Chuck Robb and against Oliver North from the pulpits of black churches in Virginia back *in 1994.*

When will sauce for the goose be sauce for the gander?

THE PEOPLE SPEAK

Crying "bigotry" and "intolerance," homosexual advocates easily intimidated corporations into yanking advertisements from Laura Schlessinger's TV show this fall. But on election day, the gay movement's push for normalization suffered some serious setbacks from Vermont to Nevada.

In Nebraska and Nevada, large majorities voted to amend the state's constitution to prohibit same-sex "marriage." In Maine, voters defeated a measure that would have prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. Only in Oregon did gay activists prevail: A ballot initiative to bar public schools from any teachings that promote homosexuality was defeated 51 to 49 percent.

Perhaps the most interesting setback for the gay rights movement occurred in Vermont, where the Democratic Party lost control of the state House of Representatives to Republicans for the first time since 1986. This was a rebuke to the Democrats for instituting statewide "civil union" marriages for gay couples in July. Vermont Governor Howard Dean, a pro-gay Democrat, squeaked by with 50 percent of the votes.

Homosexuals entered Vermont's political arena in highly visible ways this election, yet none prevailed. Republican Senator Jim Jeffords whipped his gay Democrat challenger 66 to 26 percent. Representative Bernie Sanders, the only socialist in Congress (or at least the only official one) handily defeated a transsexual Republican named Karin Kerin. She/he received just 19 percent of the vote.

—TAE *contributing writer* **Evan Gahr** *is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.*

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VOTERS GRADE THE MEDIA

We've long known that pressrooms are not "balanced"—when they vote themselves, 80 to 90 percent of national reporters choose liberals and Democrats. Now there's evidence that the public can tell. A new survey found that 39 percent of Democratic voters give the press a grade of A or B, compared to only 20 percent of Republican voters. Fully 27 percent of GOP voters flunk the media, while only 10 percent of Dems hand out Fs.

THIS IS YOUR LIFE

The Tax Foundation has just released two more of its excellent studies documenting the effects of taxes on Americans.

Finding One: Total annual taxes paid in the U.S. now come to $10,447 for every man, woman, and child in the country, on average. That's far more than we pay for any other necessities of life like housing ($5,913), health care ($4,133), food ($2,713), transportation ($2,552), or clothing ($1,436). In fact, we now pay more in taxes than we do for food, clothing, and shelter *combined.*

Finding Two: The "price" of taxes isn't limited to what we pay the government. There are, in addition, the labor, bookkeeping, legal, and other costs required to follow our labyrinthine tax code. (Last we checked, the federal tax code alone contained more than 5 *million words.*) According to the Tax Foundation's conservative estimates (they don't even include things like the costs of Tax Court litigation), complying with just the federal income tax costs U.S. citizens and companies $125 billion annually—or 12 cents for every dollar of revenue collected.

Had enough yet?

HOW W. WON THE TAX DEBATE

When Ronald Reagan advocated large tax cuts in the 1980s, he was unconcerned about the possibility of reducing federal revenues. The economic benefits of his plan would be so large, he argued, that revenues would actually rise over time in response to lower marginal tax rates. Economists have studied the actual results fairly carefully, and there is partial though not decisive evidence supporting Reagan's view. Studies find that business investment and economic growth do increase in response to lower tax rates, though not so much you'd want to bet your soul on such "supply-side" effects being large enough to increase total revenues.

George W. Bush decided early in his campaign to make a Reaganesque tax cut the centerpiece of his economic plan. From the outset, however, he and his policy team made an interesting decision: Make no mention of supply-side benefits. The effect of the tax cut would be estimated according to the archaic static analysis used by the Congressional Budget Office, and would show a large federal revenue reduction. So how would the cut be sold? You heard the argument: "Money is flooding into Washington, and candidate Bush wants to give some of it back to taxpayers before greedy politicians spend it."

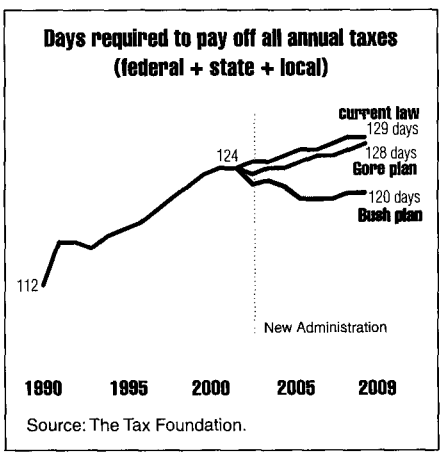
This decision may go down as the smartest policy maneuver in the campaign. Why? Because while Americans may have a hard time following the technical debate about the long-run benefits of tax cuts, they know quite well how easy it is for tax money to be wasted. The unprecedented porkathon in Washington this fall reminded the public again of this. Clinton and Gore threatened to shut down the government if the Republicans in Congress didn't give them everything they wanted, and Republicans not only caved in but upped the ante in their own pet areas. While the final numbers are not in, whisper estimates suggest that pork spending will reach unheard of heights of $50 billion to $100 billion in the next year as a result.

So we had a chance to see what happens when we try to leave taxpayer money in Washington to "pay down the debt." It gets blown. Almost every surplus penny was frittered away—on such high priority projects as a statue of the god Vulcan and a half-million-dollar parking lot for a tiny village in the wilds of Alaska.

Meanwhile, the debate over the deleterious effects of big government is turning one sided in academe. Most striking is a recent paper by Harvard professor Alberto Alesina and several colleagues prepared for the nonpartisan National Bureau of Economic Research. It shows that rising government spending significantly damages private-sector business investment. The extent of the harm is stunning: Every extra dollar of government spending appears to lower business investment by at least a comparable dollar. So the expansion of government comes directly out of our golden-egg-laying private sector.

On economic policy, at least, the Bush team cornered their opposition with a pitch that both addressed political realities right around election time and enjoyed strong scientific support. That may be how they closed the gap with an incumbent Vice President who should have won easily in an era of prosperity and peace.

—*Economist* **Kevin Hassett** *is a* TAE *contributing writer.*



THE TEACHER-CONTRACT RAT'S NEST

The veto power that teacher unions hold over educational decisions through their union contracts is a major obstacle to school improvement. Here are some of the harmful provisions common in many teacher contracts across the country.

• In some states, teacher pay increases automatically with seniority up into the thirtieth year. This soaks up funds that could be better used for merit pay or higher salaries for the best new teachers. The Labour government in Britain proposes ending automatic teacher pay increases at the tenth year—an example worth copying.

• Very few U.S. school districts provide added pay for superior performance. Tony Blair's government in Britain, by contrast, seeks to provide

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merit incentives in the $5,000-$7,000 range for half the teaching force, plus a fast-track reward of $10,000 to $12,000 for honors graduates who enter teaching.

Our unions strenuously resist any connection between pay and classroom performance. The largest teachers' union, the National Educational Association, recently declared that "Merit pay or any other system of compensation based on an evaluation of an education employee's performance is inappropriate." At long last, one major school district—Cincinnati—has implemented a merit-pay system anyway.

• Union contracts encumber teacher evaluation by limiting its frequency (say, to once every five years), limiting unannounced classroom visits, and requiring unfavorable comments be deleted from a teacher's file after a certain period. The result: Only a fraction of 1 percent of teachers are ever sanctioned for poor classroom performance.

• Unions have strenuously resisted probationary periods for new teachers. Union contracts frequently give persons serving probation elaborate procedural rights which make it hard to release bad apples.

• Because of union opposition, very few school districts authorize extra pay for teachers in scarce disciplines like computer science. At its last convention, the NEA actually declared, "The Association opposes providing additional compensation to attract and/or retain education employees in hard-to-recruit positions." The upshot in Maryland, to take one example, is that the state recruits only half the physics and chemistry instructors it needs.

• Few contracts allow administrators to hire talented candidates who come from outside the established teacher-college channels—like returning housewives, bright liberal arts graduates, and military or police officers. In many states, state laws now forbid hiring new teachers unless they've attended at least a year of education courses. Training in hard subject matter is not recognized. Principals must have at least two years of education courses, and superintendents three years—a virtual lobotomy. As a result, superintendents are now drawn from a small class of doctors of education who tour the country, failing upward.

• Union contracts provide interminable grievance appeals. Instead of giving politically responsible school boards the last word, many contracts transfer final decision-making powers to third-party arbitrators (who have an incentive to split any difference to secure re-employment).

• Many contracts preclude what would seem normal teaching responsibilities. Two Maryland contracts absolve teachers from supervising student teachers; the Baltimore contract excuses them from cafeteria duty, detention duty, lavatory and office duty, and the duplication of teaching materials. Another contract states that teacher participation in extracurricular activities must not be used as an evaluation criterion. Most contracts reserve coaching and extracurricular activity supervision to teachers, excluding community volunteers. Two Maryland contracts even bar teachers from being required to maintain student attendance records

• Contracts often allow unions to collect agency fees even from teachers who don't join the union, and to use the payroll system to channel funds to union political action committees.

The first step toward eliminating destructive contract provisions like these is simply for more people to learn that they exist—in most of our home towns.

—TAE *contributing writer* **George Liebmann** *conducted a study of teacher contracts for the Calvert Institute.*

THE EDUCATION VOTE

Concern about schools led to a record number of education initiatives on state ballots in November. Democrats used to own the education issue, but as public disquiet has grown, the battles have become more competitive politically, notes *TAE* Opinion Pulse editor Karlyn Bowman. When Gallup asked Americans in June to imagine they were voting for President "solely on a desire to strengthen the public schools," 38 percent chose George W. Bush, versus 37 percent for Al Gore. When Princeton Survey Research Associates asked in late October which candidate could better handle "education and vouchers," 42 percent said Bush, 44 percent Gore. On election day, voters who said education was the most important issue to them in casting their ballots opted for Gore over Bush, by 54-44 percent. But four years ago, only 16 percent of education-focused voters pulled the lever for Bob Dole.

THE MEDIA GRADE THE MEDIA

In the middle of the post-election mess, Howard Fineman, senior editor at Newsweek, *gave this blunt reply on "Imus in the Morning" when asked, "How would the liberal weenies of the news media be treating this if the roles [of Gore and Bush] were reversed?":*

"Oh, my God. Are you kidding? That George Bush was a crybaby, that he was the spoiled son of a failed President...the personal attacks on Bush would be just absolutely vicious."

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As the data in our "Opinion Pulse" department show (see p. 60), most parents are satisfied with their own children's education. That's why most voucher programs (including those on the ballot this November) receive only tepid support. While half of all parents with children in school support having the government give money to parents to help with the costs of private or religious schools, this support plummets to 27 percent (versus 66 percent opposed) if this is said to result in "less money for the public schools."

Yet another indication of our deep attachment to public schools comes from a query exit pollsters posed on election day. When asked what the federal government should do when a public school is failing, 78 percent chose "fix that school's problems"; only 17 percent picked "help parents pay for private school." Never mind that it's states and localities that basically run schools, not the federal government; the public's sentiments are clear.

These preferences explain why voucher initiatives went down to defeat in California and Michigan. In California, even 51 percent of conservatives voted no, as did 69 percent of Catholics. Clearly, the case for vouchers will have to be made from the bottom up, by changing popular opinion, not the top down. The accumulating results of experiments in Milwaukee, Cleveland, and elsewhere point the way.

RACE IN THE VOTING BOOTH

The recent election was heated considerably by the issue of race. In particular, Democrats did everything they could to increase turnout among blacks, including some highly tendentious final-weekend campaigning in black churches by Al Gore, Bill Clinton, and Hillary Clinton.

Did these efforts influence the election? In a post-election talk at Washington, D.C.'s Center for Equal Opportunity, political scientist David Bositis noted that the increase in black turnout was not huge overall. Just as in 1996, about 10 percent of the electorate was African American.

But black voters are concentrated in relatively few states. Bositis reported that the percentage of black voters increased the most in three states: Missouri (7 to 12 percent), Tennessee (13 to 18 percent), and Florida (10 to 15 percent). Despite these increases, Missouri and Tennessee both went for George W. Bush. In Florida, however, African American voters were critical. Across the country, blacks chose Al Gore over George W. Bush by a 90-10 margin.

Below the level of the presidential race, Bositis says blacks provided the margin of victory in three important, narrow victories for the Democrats: Mel Carnahan in the Missouri Senate race, Bill Nelson in the Florida Senate, and Mike Easley as North Carolina governor.

Meanwhile, Hispanics moved modestly toward the Republicans compared to four years ago. In the 2000 presidential contest, about a third of Hispanics voted for the GOP, a ten-point increase over 1996. But Bositis noted that about a quarter of Hispanics live in Texas, and many voted for Bush as their favorite son. It will take another election, he argued, before we can see how many Hispanics are edging away from their traditional loyalty to the Democratic Party.

2000 vote by ethnicity

	Gore	Bush
Whites	42	54
Blacks	90	9
Hispanics	62	35
Asians	55	41

Source: Voter News Service.

THE HOLE IN AMERICAN PROSPERITY

As wondrous as recent trends have been in areas like the economy and new technologies, there are some places where life has taken a turn for the worse. Family life is clearly one.

Advocates of various liberation movements would have us believe that complaints about family life today stem from nothing more than "Leave It to Beaver" nostalgia or just plain "bigotry."

Rubbish. Tottering piles of hard evidence inform us that our family problems today are real, and that the meltdown of the traditional family is leaving innocent victims scattered all over life's battlefield.

One troubling bit of recent evidence comes from a study in *Pediatrics*, conducted by five family physicians in Pittsburgh and Illinois. The doctors compared tens of thousands of local pediatric records, stretching from 1979 to 1996, and found evidence of grave increases in "psychosocial problems" among children 4-15.

Over those two decades, cases of mental retardation in children declined. Thank you, scientists.

But emotional, psychiatric, and behavioral problems among juveniles soared. Thank you, day care, illegitimacy, and divorce. The physicians carefully factored out improved diagnoses and demographic background factors, and specifically linked these new childhood traumas to the last generation's spike in single-parent families (and all that follows from that economically and emotionally).

The bottom line: Nearly one in five American children now shows evidence of a recognizable psychosocial problem, compared to under 7 percent in 1979—approaching a 300 percent increase in less than two decades. At present, "psychosocial problems are the most common chronic condition for pediatric visits, eclipsing asthma and heart disease," write the doctors. "Moreover, they are among the most disabling of pediatric conditions, with mental health symptoms accounting for fully one-third of all school days missed by adolescents."

Honest Americans have no trouble sensing the importance of this. Surveys show over and over today that Americans are deeply concerned about moral decline and related family disintegration. A recent Wirthlin Poll conducted for the Alliance for Marriage found 92 percent of the public believe our country "can only move forward as a nation if American families are strengthened." Fully 77 percent of us regard strengthening families as "a greater domestic policy priority than a cleaner environment"; 64 percent say it is more important than increasing job opportunities.

So, quick: go spend time with your kid. And encourage your neighbor to do likewise. Because someday those children will be working, dating, residing, and voting right next door to you.

United Feature Syndicate/Ed Stein

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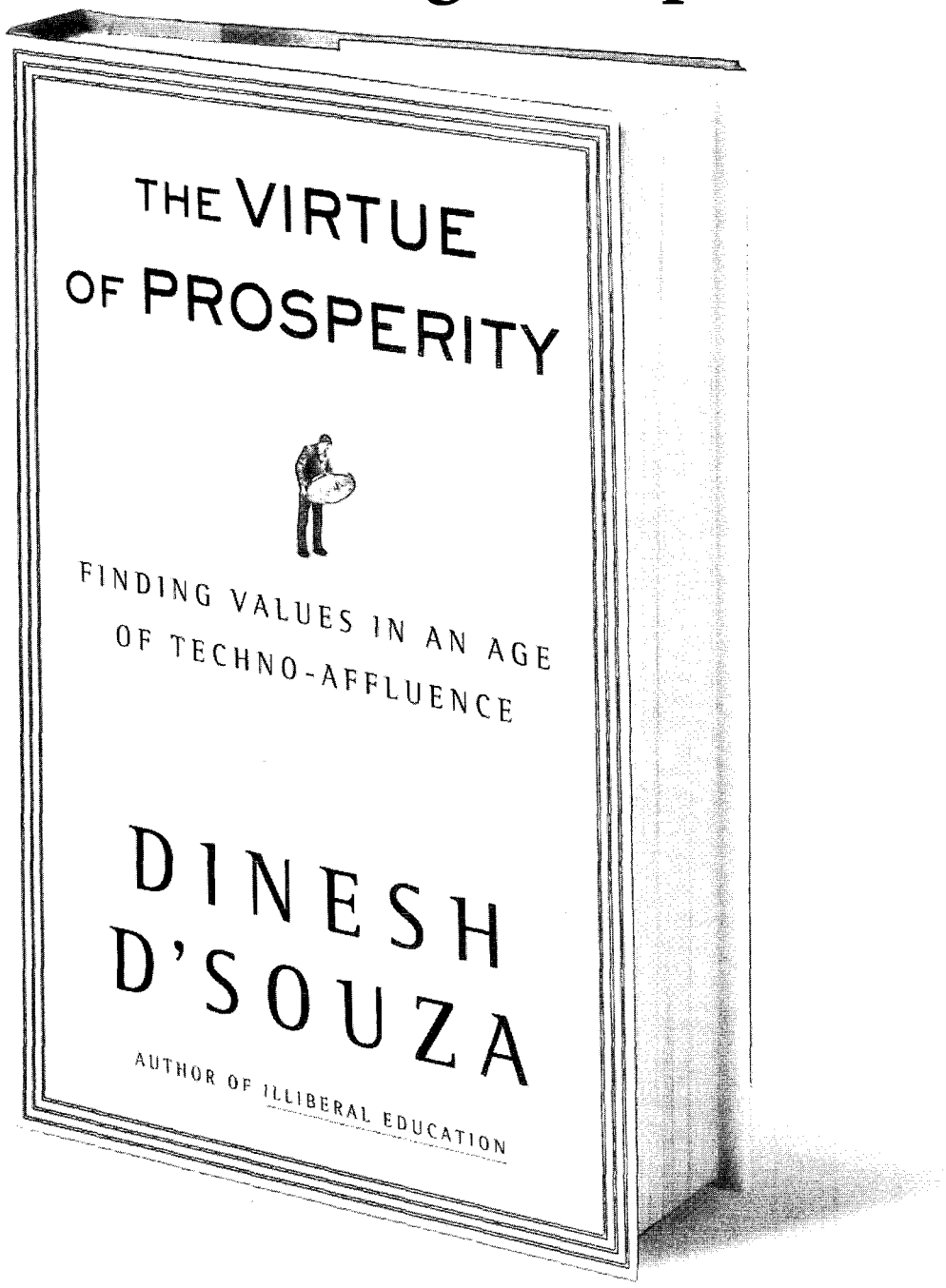
"An intellectual journey into the soul of technological capitalism."*



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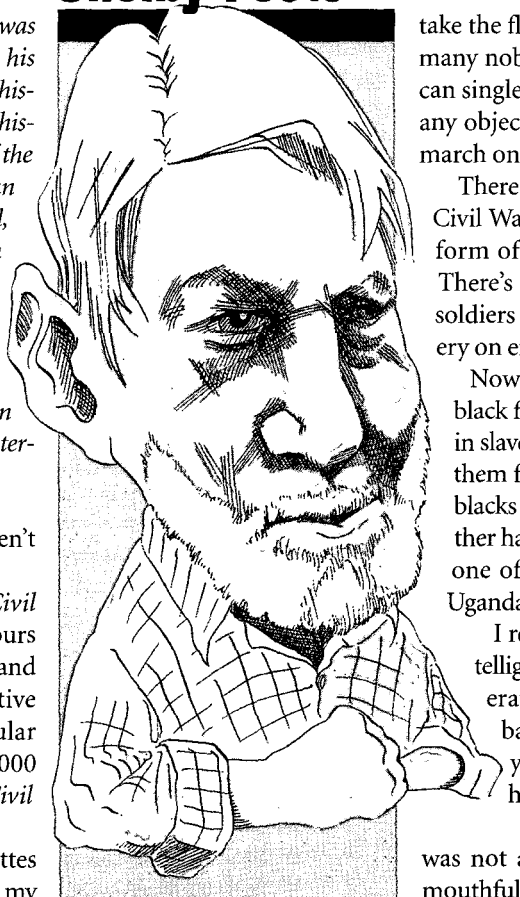
TAKE A SPIRITED RAMBLE WITH AMERICA'S MOST LITERARY HISTORIAN AS HE DISCUSSES RACISM, CIVIL WAR BATTLES, LINCOLN, COMPUTERS, THE CONFEDERATE FLAG, NOVEL WRITING, TELEVISION, REDNECKS, THE KLAN, BIG GOVERNMENT, AND YELLOW-DOG DEMOCRATS.

Shelby Foote

Shelby Foote, a native of Greenville, Mississippi, was the author of five much-admired novels when his career took one of the richest detours in literary history: He spent 20 years writing a three-volume history of the Civil War that many regard as one of the great achievements in modern letters. More than a dozen years after the last volume was published, Foote became certifiably famous when his Delta drawl and handsome presence dominated Ken Burns' PBS series, "The Civil War." Foote, now 83, remains a Mississippi original: Images of Marcel Proust and bluesman Robert Johnson adorn his study, where he still writes with a pen dipped in ink. Associate editor Bill Kauffman interviewed Foote at his home in Memphis.



I don't know of a single black writer who isn't consumed by the fact he's black.

TAE: The holy warriors against tobacco haven't convinced you to give up your pipe, I take it?

FOOTE: It took me 20 years to write *The Civil War*, and I wrote it seven days a week, six hours a day. I wrote it with a cigarette in my left hand and a pen in my right hand. At a conservative estimate of a pack and a half a day of regular Chesterfields, I figure I smoked 150,000 Chesterfields in the course of writing *The Civil War*, and I'm here to tell the story.

They did convince me to give up cigarettes when I had angioplasty, but I've been smoking my pipe three times as often as before.

TAE: Do anti-smoking zealots remind you of the mid-nineteenth-century fanatics, whether fire-eaters in the South or abolitionists in the North?

FOOTE: Fanatics we couldn't do without, but God knows they make a lot of trouble. I can no longer engage in any conversation about the Confederate flag, because you've got the black fanatics on one end and redneck yahoos on the other. We people in between—who, I suspect probably are a minority—can't be heard for the racket. So I stay out of that fuss, except to say that I'm for the Confederate flag flying anywhere anybody wants to fly it at any time. If they have a referendum in a state that says "Take the flag down off the state capitol," I think they ought to take the flag down. But the flag to me represents many noble things. It is strange to me how they can single out the Confederate flag and not have any objections to, say, the Japanese flag and the march on Bataan.

There seems to be no understanding that the Civil War was really an argument between one form of society and another form of society. There's no way I can get people to see that the soldiers were not much concerned about slavery on either side.

Now they're talking about compensating black for their ancestors' labor while they were in slavery—that's almost as absurd as charging them for their passage from Africa here. Many blacks Americans, if their great-great-grandfather hadn't come over here in chains, would be one of the skulls in Idi Amin's collection in Uganda, or God knows what.

I really do understand the pain that an intelligent black feels when he sees the Confederate flag, because the Confederate flag, back in the '60s and '70s, was carried by yahoos who represented everything that had held them down and abused them.

By the time I was 24, I realized there was not a shred of clothes on my back, not a mouthful of food in my stomach, not a book on my shelf that didn't come out of exploiting blacks. And I was as thoroughly ashamed of that as I could be. I was an exploiter of blacks indirectly. The woman who was closest to me in my life—certainly I had more to do with her than I did with my mother or anybody else—was named Nellie Lloyd. She came to work for us for three dollars a week, and at the end of 25 years she was making $18 a week. Now, that's outrageous; but my God, she meant a lot to me.

TAE: In 1970 you wrote of Klansmen who had appropriated the flag: "I tell them to their faces that they are the scum who have degraded the Confederate flag, converted it from a symbol of honor into a banner of shame, covered it with obscenities like a roadhouse men's room wall." Is the

Illustration by Lucinda S. Levine

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Confederate flag today still degraded, or have the recent assaults on it given it a new dignity?

FOOTE: It's still mainly abused and absurdly defended. And I understand blacks' feelings when they see the Confederate flag. The real villains are Southerners who knew what that flag truly stood for and allowed yahoos to carry it.

What happened during the period of the Northern students coming down to the South during the civil rights struggle was that to people down in Mississippi they were a pretty scruffy-looking group, and we thought, "They're sending their trash down here to make trouble for us. Let our trash take care of it." And our trash did, in a terrible way, like the murder of those three civil rights workers.

We should have stood up and said that those people ought not be allowed within 100 yards of the Confederate flag, let alone use it as a symbol for all they were doing. But we didn't. It's hard to take when people define you as corrupt people and scum. So you lash back.

This country has two profound sins on its soul. One is slavery—that's a sin that we will probably never be able to cleanse ourselves of—and the other was emancipation. They told four and a half million people, "You are free, hit the road," and made no provision for education. Just told them to go out, and of course they drifted back into sharecropping, which is a form of peonage, and it was just a disaster.

If the South had not lost the war, I'm sure that slavery wouldn't have survived into the twentieth century, and it's possible that it might have been brought to an end in a more gradual, less disastrous way. Many of the troubles we've got today with black communities are from their being released into the world without being prepared to deal with it.

TAE: Was the diaspora of Southern blacks into Northern cities a tragedy for both North and South?

FOOTE: It was certainly a tragedy for the South. I'm going down to Greenville tomorrow, and it breaks my heart to go down there: The subtraction of the blacks has changed society entirely. It's not as leisurely as it was; it lacks the grace that it had.

I speak the way I do because my nurse taught me how to talk. Now, the influence of mass communication has modified accents all over the place.

TAE: General Nathan Bedford Forrest is still memorialized in Memphis. Is it possible any more for white and black people of goodwill to sit down and figure out how to treat men like Forrest?

FOOTE: It's extremely difficult. I've got a good friend here, a graduate of the Yale Law School, a black man who says from the time he was a teenager walking past Forrest Park and seeing that statue of this ex-slave trader and imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, his purpose in life was to get him removed from that park.

This country has two profound sins on its soul. One is slavery. And the other is the way the slaves were emancipated.

And I say, you don't know anything about Bedford Forrest. He was one of the finest men ever lived, in many ways. Plus being a true military genius. To take Forrest out of Forrest Park is as if the women in Paris got together and took Napoleon out of the Les Invalides because he wasn't nice to the ladies. But I couldn't get it across to him. He feels real pain at seeing this city more or less worship what he considers the worst oppressor of them all.

TAE: After the Civil War, a compromise was obtained in which the North acknowledged the bravery of the Southern soldiers and the valor with which they fought for a cause in which they believed, while the South acknowledged that maybe it was for the best that the Union was preserved. Has this compromise finally broken down?

FOOTE: It has. Senator Moseley-Braun (D-Il.) persuaded her fellow Senators to disallow the use of the Confederate symbol on the Daughters of the Confederacy stationery in Alexandria. It wasn't a Confederate battle flag; it was just a Confederate symbol. Well, that's disruptive of the compromise, which really worked to a considerable extent.

Some highly intelligent men—the agrarians, for instance—still regret enormously that the South didn't succeed in secession. The poet Allen Tate described the Civil War as an attempt by the North to put the South into Arrow collars.

Some of that has happened. But I don't know that it wouldn't have happened to the Confederacy, too. What's more, the Confederacy probably would have exploded into pieces: [Georgia Governor] Joe Brown and some of those other governors were fixing to fly apart again.

Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, believed that the erring sisters would return to the fold. He especially had an idea that a war with Mexico would reunite the North and South. But Lincoln made the thing—Lincoln is a true genius. It is absolutely incredible that he was able to define the war in a way to hold the Union together, being careful not to alienate the border state people while he's placating the New Englanders. He said at some point, "I hope God is on our side, but I must have Kentucky."

TAE: In the Civil War trilogy, Jefferson Davis is presented as a man of integrity and character and purpose. Was Davis the equal of Lincoln?

FOOTE: You matched him against genius, which is unfair. Davis had faults and Lincoln had faults, but Lincoln always learned from his faults, and he

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was able to turn them into virtues.

Davis had this code of honor that literally was disruptive. For example, some superior officer came to him and reported that some brigadier was unfit for the job and should be relieved from duty. This brigadier was a good friend of Davis's, and Davis fired him. And the man came to see Davis and said, "How could you, my old friend, do this to me?" Davis didn't say, "Your superior told me that I have to get rid of you." He said, "You've got your orders." That's the code.

Lincoln would have found a way around all that. In the first place, he probably wouldn't have fired him. And Davis had this stiffness that gave him tremendous integrity, but it interfered with his efficiency as President. He also spent too much time on small things; night after night working on stuff that somebody else could have done. Lincoln didn't do that.

TAE: Union General George McClellan has gotten a bad rap from his age down to ours. Is it possible to view him as a decent man who shied from a war of attrition, who lacked Grant's and Sherman's brutality and wanted to spare civilians the horror of total war?

FOOTE: I think you can make that case very well. The main thing to remember about McClellan was he created the instrument with which Grant won the war. It was McClellan who made the Army of the Potomac. Also it's overlooked how much his men loved him. He and Robert E. Lee and Joe Johnston could all have a big scramble over who won the most affection. The nearest competitor on the Northern side would be Sherman, not Grant. Grant never courted anybody's affections.

Grant is a man worth studying. He never accepted blame for anything ever at any time. That's what made him so steady on the line. The other thing is, he worried very little about what the enemy might do to him; he always thought about what he was going to do to the enemy. He's a superb soldier; he's brave. And yet he's a complicated man in a lot of ways.

He couldn't eat meat unless it was cooked to a char because he didn't want the sight of blood. My God—the Army of the Potomac had more casualties than Lee had in his whole infantry and artillery combined. And he kept going all the time; never thought of turning back, didn't even cross his mind.

TAE: The National Park Service has begun de-emphasizing battles at battle sites and instructing visitors in the "real cause of the war": slavery. What do you think of this?

FOOTE: It is outrageous. What went on on that battlefield ought not be cluttered up with all these things. You want to understand that battle, you'd better study the battle.

Ulysses Grant couldn't eat meat unless it was cooked to a char because he didn't want the sight of blood.

What's more, if they're going to talk about slavery at any great length, they're also going to have to talk about the Constitution and God knows what else. I have no objection whatsoever to instructing people about the evils of slavery or the tricks and trades of the Constitution; I think that's all good. But when you're studying the battle, you've got to get all of that out of your mind and concentrate on the men who did the fighting, who didn't give a damn about the Constitution or slavery while the battle was going on.

TAE: Was it for the best that Lincoln won in 1860?

FOOTE: Yes. I think that it's best that the country didn't split in two; I do believe that firmly. And Lincoln was the one who kept it from splitting in two. I'm not saying that some other man couldn't have done it, too, because the occasion does make the man. Lincoln was made great by the war. Bedford Forrest, if it hadn't been for war, would simply have been a very efficient alderman here in Memphis.

The thing I just wish so fervently is that after Shiloh, both sides would have said, "Wait a minute." They had 24 percent casualties at Shiloh. That's the same as Waterloo. There were 100,000 men on that field, and 24,000 casualties. We should have said "Whoa, wait. We're going to kill all the young men in the country if this keeps on." And though they didn't know it, they had another ten Waterloos down the road.

TAE: Have you seen any good Civil War movies?

FOOTE: *Gettysburg* was a good job, if he had just gotten Longstreet a better beard.

TAE: It's very good, though Martin Sheen plays a fey Robert E. Lee.

FOOTE: I happen to know, from talking to Horton Foote, that it is the dream of Robert Duvall's life to play Robert E. Lee. Why they didn't get him, I don't know. Duvall would have been superb.

But I like Martin Sheen. He communicated Lee's nervousness, his being off stride, and that was very bold and brave of him to do that. He didn't communicate Lee's dignity, but he communicated the most important thing at Gettysburg.

TAE: You wrote the first two volumes of the Civil War trilogy during the genesis and then the critical years of the civil rights movement. Did the antics of Bull Connor and Orval Faubus and suchlike have any effect on the writing of the books?

FOOTE: In the bibliographical note to the second volume, which came out in '63, I thanked Wallace and Faubus and [Mississippi Governor] Ross Barnett for making me better understand the problems that caused the Civil War and for helping to lessen my sectional bias by reproducing in their action much that was least admirable in the position my

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forbears occupied when they stood up to Lincoln.

TAE: Were you at all sympathetic to the states' rights arguments that these guys were making?

FOOTE: I'm sympathetic to the states' rights people only in a pragmatic way. To have the same speed limit in Vermont that you have in New Mexico is ridiculous.

I'm a yellow-dog Democrat, a true believer in everything that the Democratic Party stands for. I still admire Franklin Roosevelt tremendously for saving us from fascism or communism. I'm inclined to think the government can solve all problems; I have found out that that's a long way from true. The central government does a very bad job if you turn education over to them: You wind up either with a bunch of academics who think they have the answer to everything or politicians who will do things for political reasons, and it's a bad scene.

I have found out over the last 50 years that the government can create as many problems as it solves, but I'm still a good, solid Democrat. One thing I admire about the Republicans greatly is their intense concern for the individual as opposed to the state. They're always out to protect the individual.

When television first came on in the early '50s during the Eisenhower campaign, I said, "Now we can now look the creature in the face while he's lying to us, and we're going to be able to tell." And I was wrong as I could be. The man is packaged on television for you to look at, and you can be fooled very badly. The result is, in an election, I no longer vote for the man, I vote the party.

TAE: Do you watch much TV?

FOOTE: Yes, I watch the news every night. I watch talk shows like Chris Matthews, whom I despise. I love watching him because he's so awful. Chris Matthews, he's bouncing on his ass with delight at giving the President trouble. And that vexes me.

TAE: You like the President?

FOOTE: Yes. I think Clinton has made a hell of a President. He's also a hell of a fool, but that goes with it.

TAE: Politicians today don't even speak their own words.

FOOTE: That's quite true, and it's always been to a degree true. Lincoln's speeches were mostly by himself, but the "better angels of our nature" was Seward. I said Lincoln was a political genius; he's other kinds of geniuses, too. He's a writer very close to the caliber of Mark Twain.

I have found that children are no longer required to memorize the Gettysburg Address in school, and that dismays me to think of young people wandering around without those rhythms in their brain. Memory work is frowned on now in schools: that's crazy. I'm very old-fashioned. I do not know what's going to happen as a result of being able to get all the information you want with your index finger on a computer. I can't begin to say how many things I discovered while I was looking through books for something else.

TAE: You don't use a computer?

FOOTE: I don't have a computer, I don't have e-mail, I never wanted any kind of secretary or typist or anything like that. Partly for the reason I'm talking about: I made huge numbers of discoveries doing my own research.

TAE: Were you in Memphis when Martin Luther King was shot?

FOOTE: I saw King get off the airplane as I was leaving to go to Virginia. I started to go up and speak to him, shake hands with him, tell him I was glad he was in Memphis. But he looked so frightened that I thought that if I walked up to him, they would think I was some kind of an assassin, so I didn't do it. I've always regretted I didn't do that.

TAE: Would you say you're a Southerner before you're an American?

FOOTE: I'm a Southerner first. There's no need in denying that; I simply am. When I see a list of people killed in an airplane crash, I look for the Southerners on board.

And of course I've got racism in my bones; I'm against it and I counteract it as best I can, but if I had on clean clothes and was standing on a curb waiting for somebody and a Cadillac passed and splashed mud on me, and it was all blacks in the Cadillac, I would say, "They never shouda let them up." That's in your bones and you can't get rid of it, but you can counteract it, which I do.

TAE: In your correspondence with Walker Percy, occasionally you'll casually write "nigger." Do you think that 50 years hence, as we grow morally loftier, literary critics are going to say, "Foote was beyond the pale using language like that"?

FOOTE: You get back to what hurts people's feelings, which is never a good thing to do. And I don't think in my whole life I ever called a Negro a "nigger" to him, unless I was joking the way they do with each other.

I'll tell you when this race thing will straighten itself out. I'll know that it's solved when black writers stop being black writers. I don't know of a single black writer who isn't consumed by the fact that he's black. I believe in people writing about what they know about—God knows, everything I do is Southern—but I'll know that we've got some kind of equality when I can no longer recognize a black writer by glancing at the page.

Johnny Cochran, in the O.J. Simpson trial, was

> At Shiloh, there were 100,000 men on the field, and 24,000 casualties. We should have said, "Whoa, wait. We're going to kill all the young men in the country if this keeps on."

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absolutely indignant because some witness said he recognized a Negro voice over the telephone. Well, that's absurd. I recognize a Negro voice over the telephone all the time. And the worst racist in that courtroom was Johnny Cochran.

TAE: Did your elevation to celebrity status after the Ken Burns series vex you or did you find fame easier to take than you'd expected?

FOOTE: Both. It's irksome when it's a disruption, but it's pleasant, too. It's an affirmation that you've done something that will be here after you're gone. It's nice to get a good table in a restaurant; it's nice to have people tell you they like your work; it's nice to have firemen waving at you; that's the good side.

The other is the disruption. People will come up to you and call you by your first name whom you've never seen, or call you all hours on the telephone; I'm so stubborn I won't take my name out of the phone book, so I run into all kinds of trouble.

Freud said all men have three urges that make them do what they do: the desire for fame, the desire for money, and the love of women. He didn't mention inspiration or any of that. He was wrong to leave something out: there's a great pleasure in good writing. To engage in art in a way that pleases you is an enormous satisfaction.

TAE: Which of his trio is the most powerful?

FOOTE: The desire for fame. We all want to say, "Kilroy was here."

TAE: Your maternal grandfather was a Viennese Jew. Did you ever feel Jewish at all?

FOOTE: I went to the synagogue as a boy. I went to Saturday school, so that I know the Shema Y'israel and so on. But no, I never felt Jewish. And I always knew the disadvantages of being Jewish. I'm three-quarters Episcopalian, and it seemed to me I was going to have a much easier time in life being an Episcopalian than I would as a Jew.

TAE: Have you ever been tempted by the religious impulse?

FOOTE: No. That's left out of me. I have very little concern with life after death. Thomas Hardy said "I've been looking for God for 50 years and if he was there, I would have found him."

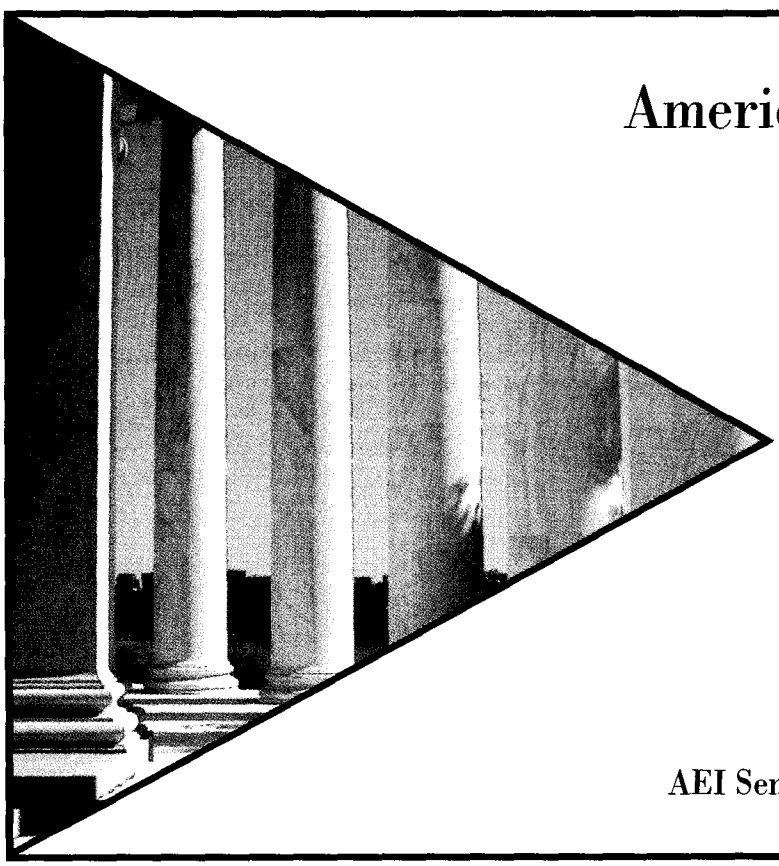
TAE: What do you think of writers being subsidized by the government through things like the National Endowment for the Arts?

FOOTE: I'm very much against it. I'm for subsidizing the arts—opera, the theater, symphony orchestras, and so forth—but I think creative people should be left alone. It takes away from what you're doing. Even a grant does that. I think just making enough to pay the light bill is an affirmation of your commitment.

American poetry, as far as I can see, is as dead as a doornail. The reason is that all the American poets are on college campuses, and they sit around talking about their work—which a writer knows you're not supposed to do—and jumping the coeds, which is time-consuming.

TAE: You once said that "small town America in 1910 is still my notion of the happiest time on earth." Why is that?

FOOTE: It was before all the new things like the telephone, let alone the radio and so forth, which came in to clutter up our lives. I can remember a time about 1920, with men in the evening out watering their lawns with a hose, and there was a strong feeling of family; front porches were used in hot weather. It just seemed like a cozier time and a time when there was more mutual understanding. That may not be true, incidentally; but it seemed to me so.



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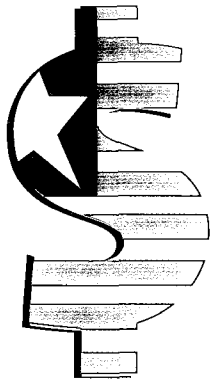
James Glassman



Shareholders of the World Unite!

Keep your eye on a financial trend that will eventually be a political one. The United States is becoming a nation of investors, and people with money in the stock market are likely to change their outlook about important political matters like taxes, regulation, trade, property rights, and labor relations.

Last year about one in four households owned individual stocks. Polls place the proportion of households owning stock through any means at around half. An *Investor's Business Daily* survey found 49 percent of households had stock investments of $10,000 or more.

For political purposes, the most exciting findings of recent surveys are (1) the fastest-growing groups of new investors are young people and lower-middle-income families; (2) investors are more apt to be voters than non-investors; and (3) investors lean Republican.

A study by the Joint Economic Committee of Congress reported that from 1989-98 the proportion of families with incomes from $25,000 to $50,000 who owned stock rose from 32 percent to 53 percent. Among families with a household head under 35, the proportion went from 22 percent to 41 percent; for families with a household head aged 35 to 44, from 39 percent to 57 percent.

Several studies find investors are voters. And in the 2000 vote, investors chose George W. Bush over Al Gore by 51 percent to 47 percent, while among non-investors, Gore led Bush, 52 percent to 45 percent, according to exit polls.

But what is the political issue when it comes to stocks? Certainly, stockholders want lower taxes, especially on capital gains, dividends, and estates. Broad stock ownership may have been one reason Bill Clinton didn't veto the 1997 capital gains cut. It was hard to call it a break for fat cats when half of Americans own stock.

More important to corporations are such things as overzealous environmental regulation and government intervention in general. Many of these issues are specific to individual firms, but so far investors show no inclination to exert political influence. Nor have firms asked them to.

That's curious. Consider Microsoft, the object of an expensive, exhausting anti-trust action launched by the Justice Department in 1997. Microsoft has 2 million individual shareholders, and I would guess at least 20 million other investors own Microsoft stock through their mutual funds and pension plans.

As I write, Microsoft stock is down by more than half from its 1999 highs, losing an astounding $300 billion in market value for shareholders. Yet the company made no major effort to mobilize its investors, nor do they spontaneously rise up, sending letters to the attorney general or the President, or even publishing ads in newspapers.

Similarly, we have seen no revolt by owners of oil stocks or pharmaceutical stocks, the latest whipping boys of politicians—no more than we ever heard a peep from owners of tobacco stocks, at a time when Philip Morris, once the largest U.S. corporation by market value, was being taken apart by politicians and trial lawyers.

Why the silence? First, many shareholders are transients. They may own Microsoft for a while, but then move on to Cisco or General Electric. They seem to lack loyalty. Second, many own stock through mutual funds and may not know what's in their portfolios. And those portfolios are well diversified; so a $10,000 stake in Fidelity's Magellan fund may include just $300 worth of Microsoft stock—not enough to fret about.

Still, the main reason investors haven't taken up the cudgels for the corporations whose stock they own is that the corporations have not asked. This is a big mistake. Unions don't hesitate to get their members into the fray, and companies often recruit their employees to fight for their political interests. Why not shareholders?

While some investors are traders, only owning stock for a few months or even days, tens of thousands of others are in for the long haul. Companies should use them. Of course, firms need to act in a gingerly fashion, not bombarding their entire shareholder mailing list with political appeals but identifying the activists.

One company has made an exemplary effort: Coca-Cola. In both its annual report and in interim reports to shareholders, Coke included a flyer urging investors to join "The Coca-Cola Company Civil Action Network": "Help us reduce or prevent the high costs of unwarranted governmental regulation and taxation by guaranteeing that our collective opinions are heard." Shareholders were asked to send back a business-reply card and, according to a source, some 60,000 have.

Even on broader matters of trade, taxes, and regulation, the "investor class" or "shareholder society" has not come anywhere close to reaching political consciousness. But it will.

We are at the beginning of a huge change in American politics. For the first time in history, as one observer puts it, we have a "mass class of worker-capitalists—men and women whose wealth-seeking activities include both wage-earning and capital ownership." In politics, the change is happening gradually. There is nothing wrong with giving it a nudge.

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Model Schools

14 Academies That Teach

Over a period of a year, *The American Enterprise* sent its reporters to visit schools all across America. We assessed suburban magnets, gritty inner-city public schools, Catholic, Jewish, and evangelical Protestant religious facilities, New England boarding schools, military establishments, brand new charter schools, and age-old private academies.

Their educational methods and student populations vary enormously, but each of the institutions profiled below has fascinating things to teach our nation as we struggle to improve our too-often mediocre and sometimes abysmal schools.

Our reporters were Martin Wooster, Eli Lehrer, Naomi Schaefer, Evan Gahr, Scott Walter, Andy Thomas, and Bob Sale. Here are their dispatches.

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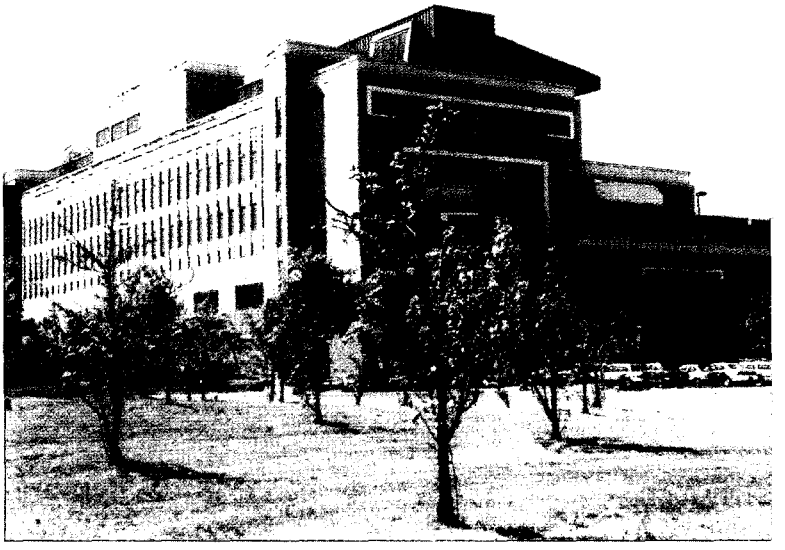
Townsend Harris High School

Queens, New York



Townsend Harris High School.

It was one of Fiorello LaGuardia's famous mistakes.

The legendary New York City mayor, who liked to say he rarely made a mistake but that it was "a beaut" when he did, closed Townsend Harris High School in 1942 to save space and money. The school's alumni—writer Herman Wouk, scientist Jonas Salk, actor Edward G. Robinson—would soon be household names, and LaGuardia would later concede his gargantuan error. But it was too late.

Then in 1980, a group of Townsend Harris alumni embarked upon a three-year battle to convince city officials to re-open the school. They succeeded. Today, the school is housed in a sparkling new building at Queens College in Flushing and has a reputation as one of the Big Apple's premier public schools. Students face requirements like two years of either classical Greek or Latin, plus three years of modern foreign languages. Each year some 4,000 kids compete for 250 seats in the freshman class.

Lurking in the background, however, are detractors who would like to see the school shut as abruptly as last time. In the minds of some rabblerousers Townsend is "elitist," "exclusionary," "unfair to minorities," and "a drain on other public schools."

At Townsend Harris, the charge of elitism leaves many older alumni bewildered. When they began work to re-open their beloved school, "we decided we wanted to be more than a bunch of old guys clapping each other on the back and saying 'Hey, you lived another year,'" recalls Ted Peck, a retired advertising executive. So they sought to establish a school for the humanities where, once again, highly motivated students of modest means could thrive. Rebuffed by school officials in Brooklyn, they had better luck in Queens—and won the support of key borough politicians.

The next hurdle was approval by the Board of Education, a byzantine apparatus whose members are appointed by borough presidents and the mayor. In 1983, the Board of Education approved the school—over the vociferous objections of other school principals and "community activists." Even after it opened the near year, in the temporary quarters of a rented Yeshiva on Flushing Boulevard, the "anti-elitism" campaign continued. Neighborhood principals, including many heading lackluster schools, fretted that Townsend would take their best students.

For the first four years, there were rumors every June that the school would close. But by the fifth year the school was clearly here to stay. "We've earned our right to existence," says Peck.

Townsend Harris, which moved to its current location in 1995, is an inspirational place. It achieves excellence neither through the huge influx of money that liberals favor, nor through the so-called exclusionary policies they attack. Instead, the school relies on time-tested principles that were once second nature for public schools all across the country: tight discipline and high expectations.

Townsend Harris students, many of them first-generation Americans, regularly win Westinghouse Science contests and other prizes and gain admission to top colleges. Malcolm Largmann, the principal who has steered the school since its re-birth, says "we have kids from all over the city," including many from communities with the social pathologies that supposedly make it impossible for kids to learn. "We expect kids to do their best. Every kid has to meet high criteria."

The school draws on many unique resources. Nearby Queens College faculty lecture at the school about once a month. Under Townsend Harris's Senior Year Bridge Program, twelfth graders take courses for college credit at Queens. And Townsend Harris alumni serve as mentors and benefactors—underwriting everything from computers to college scholarships. Under a complex arrangement with the powerful teachers' union, Townsend can hire most of its own instructors, instead of being required to take whomever the central Board of Education sends their way, as many schools must.

Yet Largmann, a short, dapper man with a bushy gray mustache, is quick to remark that "People forget we are a public school." Per pupil funding, at $9,000, is commensurate with other public schools in New York. "Everyone needs money but that's not the answer," he says. "You can pour money into a school but see it wasted."

Meanwhile, the old-fashioned discipline and decorum that pervade Townsend Harris don't have a price. "I have a responsibility to set the tone and ambiance that is appropriate," says Largmann. "We don't have the discipline problems that other public schools do, because we're careful about small details. If we say no Walkmans, we attend to that." He even delicately upbraids teachers when their classrooms get messy.

Largmann, who is scheduled to retire in January, discourages clubs based on ethnicity. He ensures that a small flag hangs above the blackboard in every classroom. The school day starts with the Pledge of Allegiance, and in the privacy of his office he stands up and puts his hand over his heart during the recitation. (Largmann snapped, "You're standing the wrong way" to a visiting reporter and told him which way to face the flag.)

There is no religion in Townsend Harris—only Bible as literature—and no religious clubs. But religious students are free to use the Hillel or Newman Center at adjacent Queens College.

Admission is linked to performance, but there is no standardized test that determines admission, as at New York's Stuyvesant High. Admissions here are not entirely color blind; the school is required

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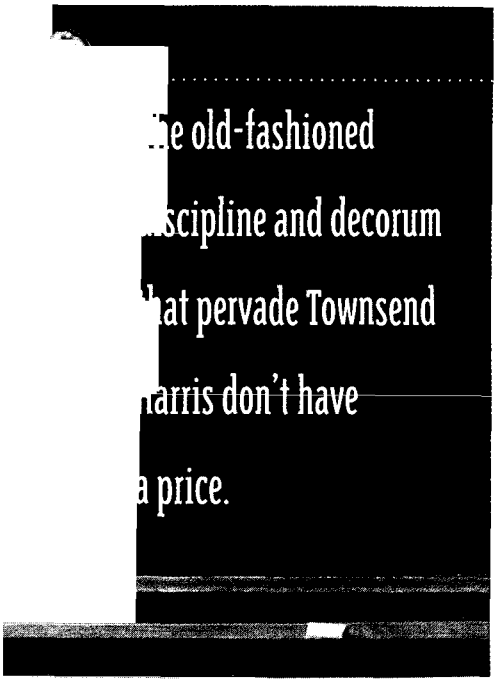

by the Board of Education to be half white and half minority.

Students are an ambitious lot—seemingly oblivious to the political backdrop of their school—and utterly unpretentious. They seem to tackle their school's demands with determination and humor. Across many subjects, the classes at Townsend Harris have the same feel. Everywhere from English to mathematics, the Socratic method reigns.

In his chemistry class in a corner room overlooking Queens College, Michael Anzel presents a lesson on "the mass of product." Instead of just spelling the concept out for the students to regurgitate on exams, he prods the kids to understand the concept. "You're a practicing chemist at Colgate. Why predict mass of products?"

In a Latin class, the teacher writes a phrase on the blackboard and asks her young charges to translate it. It turns out to be an ode to the Yankees' World Series victory. In biology class, teacher Shaibing Shen, a 1992 Townsend Harris graduate, demands feedback. "You can break the bond by what process?" When students give one word answers she demands they speak in complete sentences.

Too demanding? The previous Townsend Harris High School was even rougher on its students. Bert Sheperd, a 1934 graduate and retired accountant, recalls a teacher who would upbraid students if they wrote "R" on the blackboard in a style that didn't fit his dictates. "What is that?" he would bark.

In some sense, the school has come full circle from its earlier incarnation as an all-boys schools, attended mostly by the sons of Jewish immigrants. Although co-ed today, it once again provides a vehicle for first-generation Americans to prosper and take full advantage of what America offers.

When the school looks to the past for inspiration, however, it usually gazes much further back in time—to ancient Greece. Largmann keeps a small bust of Socrates in his office, and the Ephebic Oath, a citizenship pledge from ancient Greece, is prominently posted at the entrance to his third floor suite. On Founders' Day, seniors traditionally administer a pledge to freshmen in which they promise like good Athenian citizens: "I shall never bring disgrace to my city.... I shall fight for the ideals and sacred things of the city.... I shall not leave my city any less but rather greater than I found it."

In their lives as well as their words, the kids at Townsend Harris High School will undoubtedly do much to honor their city. The real question—with ramifications nationwide—is whether their city and its leaders are prepared to do sufficient honor to this demanding school in return.

— Evan Gahr

Vista Charter School
(National Heritage Academies) Grand Rapids, Michigan

Five years ago, Dan Brink and three of his fellow teachers in the Grand Rapids public schools came up with what they thought was a great idea for a "60 Minutes" segment—they were going to expose what Brink calls "the big scheme of charter schools." He remembers, "We knew they weren't really public. They were just a way of getting a Christian education without paying tuition." Brink, who was "heavily involved" in the teachers' unions on the national, state, and local levels (even working on their P.R. commissions), had been a teacher and administrator for 34 years, and was hardly going to be taken in by the "scheme."

When his friend and colleague Jan VanDeusen took a job as principal of the Vista charter school (one of a chain of for-profit charter schools called the National Heritage Academies) in a low-income neighborhood of Grand Rapids, Brink was simply "appalled." "I couldn't believe she did that. She was such a loyal member of the public school system."

About two years ago, when Brink was on the verge of retirement, he got the first of many phone calls from VanDeusen asking him to take a look at Vista. Though his initial reaction was "I wouldn't be caught dead at a charter school," Brink was eventually convinced to see for himself. "I walked into the whole assembly of kids, and it just tore me up. I had tears in my eyes."

What could bring a public school veteran like Brink to such an emotional state? A plain-looking gym filled with about 500 similarly clad students of all different races, sitting quietly on the floor in straight lines, and bursting into applause whenever a teacher announces the academic accomplishments of one of their classmates. Or maybe it was the parents standing in the back of the room, chatting quietly with teachers, offering to volunteer in their child's classroom. Or maybe it was VanDeusen's smile as she led the group saying the Pledge of Allegiance and singing "My Country 'Tis of Thee." Looking back, Brink explains, "It was something I had never seen before. I was used to covering football games where the kids didn't even stand for the national anthem."

Not only has Brink changed his mind about charter schools, he has started a second career this year, as assistant principal of Vista. It's easy to see why. From the first-grade classroom, where Joy Oosterheert leads an excited game that combines counting by tens with jumping up and down, to the fifth grade, where Michelle Stevens imparts the importance of fractions, the kids and teachers both seem focused and energetic.

Tamara Bowman looks like she couldn't be happier with the education her daughter and two nieces are receiving at Vista. "It's the way the teachers interact with the students," she says. The school loosely follows a "back to basics" curriculum devised by *Cultural Literacy* educator E.D. Hirsch. As Todd Avis, NHA's educational director, explains, "There is basic subject material that every child regardless of socioeconomic background should know." And the method seems to be working. Though most of

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the kids come from low-income households and the student body is almost 70 percent minority, the results from last year's Metropolitan Achievement Test show students scoring well nationally, and improving dramatically from last year.

Curious whether the "culture of learning" NHA tries to impart in its schools has really taken hold, we approached eighth-grader Karla Ramirez. Isn't it embarrassing to stand at an assembly when teachers call out the names of other students who've earned good grades? She answers easily, "since most of the school tries to get good grades, they can't make fun of you." Then she pauses, and begins to giggle. "And you know, people here are always saying they have As when they don't. No one at my old school did that."

As a publicly funded charter school (parents are not charged tuition), Vista is required to take any child who applies. (A lottery is instituted in cases where a charter school has too many applicants.) The school does not "track" students but mixes those with different learning abilities. To avoid problems this has caused at other schools, the Hirsch method relies on "lots of drill and repetition," which allows both general and special-needs students to excel.

But good teaching is only one reason Tamara Bowman's daughter is at Vista. "With the curriculum and the moral focus, they are much like the Christian schools." Each month, the students at Vista are encouraged to focus on a different virtue, like, say, perseverance. Teachers do not simply explain the virtue; they encourage students to demonstrate it. When appropriate, they stop teaching to impart a moral lesson.

One of the first things that struck Dan Brink when he came to Vista was the discipline. "It's fantastic—fantastic, but fair." Many things contribute. Parents and teachers cite the school uniform as helping to instill an atmosphere of respect. More importantly, teachers are allowed to discipline students without being second-guessed. It's obvious some of the teachers are still getting used to that idea. When second-grade teacher Julie Waclawski took a dry-erase board away from one of her students because she was coloring on it instead of paying attention to the lesson, she quickly explained that she often must provide structure and discipline for students who lack it at home.

Waclawski, who came to Vista four years ago from a typical public school, seems very concerned with the moral education she is giving her students. "It is a terrific challenge raising kids today, and it's a difficult time to grow up." She believes teachers, school administrators, and parents must work together to give kids an ordered environment.

Working closely with parents is a central tenet at Vista and all of the National Heritage Academies. Parents are allowed to go into any classroom they want, at any time, whether or not they have a child in it, no matter what the teacher is doing.

Parent Bowman, who works full time, volunteers every Monday and Thursday morning, and she is hardly unusual. Some work longer hours Monday through Thursday so they can come in on Fridays. Others take off one day a month to help teachers either in the classroom or with special projects they are preparing for the future. "At the public schools," Bowman explains, "parents just stand outside and look in, and I don't think that's right." While VanDeusen explains that on occasion teachers find this policy a little bothersome, on the whole she says they're happy for the help. In the classroom, the kids don't seem at all distracted by the presence of parents, presumably because it's an everyday occurrence.

Vista Charter School.

Even parents who don't volunteer are expected to be heavily involved with at least their own child. Some parents are initially taken aback at the relatively small infractions that merit a call home. But Brink explains, "Every time I call a parent about a discipline issue, I say this is the way you wanted it. You chose this school." Whenever homework is not submitted on time, a call is made. "I'd rather be having conversations with parents when these kids are in third or fourth grade than when they come home after a semester of college because they have flunked," says Avis.

The parents also seem to have a community of their own. Each NHA school has its own parents' room, open for mothers and fathers to plan fundraisers, talk to teachers, or enjoy each other's company over a cup of coffee. Parents at many of the schools have also formed nondenominational prayer groups that meet once a week with the principal and whichever teachers care to join.

But the prayer groups and the overall moral tone of the schools have gotten the National Heritage Academies into trouble. A group of parents sued NHA's Vanguard School, also located in Grand Rapids, for constitutional violations of the First Amendment's Establishment clause. Though a judge dismissed the charges, saying the plaintiffs "provided no more than a scintilla of evidence to support a finding that any constitutionally impermissible conduct occurred," the teachers admit they walk a fine line.

Meanwhile, VanDeusen credits their strong commitment as teachers to "their solid Christian values." Whatever the reason, the teachers at Vista are certainly a talented and devoted crew. They spend what amounts to six-and-a-half hours a day in the classroom (significantly longer than most public school teachers), and sometimes come in early, stay late, and work on weekends. VanDeusen is quick to compare Vista with her previous school. "When I was in a traditional public school, I had a staff that was really quite mediocre. They had been teaching for a good number of years, and they were trying to max out their time. I was never able to evaluate them. Often they came from other schools because of their unsatisfactory performance."

At Vista, though, VanDeusen has complete control over hiring

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and firing. "Applicants come here because they have confidence in their skill level. They realize there is no tenure here, but it doesn't matter because they know they can do the job." Applicants are required to be state certified.

"The secret to great leadership is hiring people who are better than you are," explains Peter Ruppert, president of the National Heritage Academies. The organization's teachers are paid 91 percent of the average teacher's salary in the public school district where they're located (which amounts to 95 percent because of the lack of union dues). In addition, he suggests, there is "tremendous non-monetary compensation at the National Heritage Academies." Beyond the base salary, Ruppert says, everything is done on a "pay for performance" basis. Teachers are evaluated by their principal, and through semi-annual parent satisfaction surveys.

"We try to figure out what parents want for their kids," says Ruppert. "They want to be treated like customers." At public schools, says NHA's founder J.C. Huizenga, "Their idea of customer service is sending out a truant officer." Huizenga, a big fan of Milton Friedman since he discovered the free-market economist in college, is often asked how he can run schools as businesses and profit off of children. "If we can deliver better quality education for less money and still have money left over, shouldn't that be the reward for a job well done?"

—Naomi Schaefer

The Calvert School

Baltimore, Maryland, and worldwide

It's eight a.m. on a crisp October day, and Calvert School head master Merrill Hall III begins classes with a daily ritual that's over a century old. As his six predecessors have done before him, he stands in the hallway to greet every student. On Baltimore's Tuscany Road a line of SUVs is forming from the city's better northern suburbs, discharging well-scrubbed students eager to learn.

As the students trudge up the stairs with their heavy backpacks, Hall looks each in the eye, bends forward, and says "good morning." The student then has to say "Good morning, Mr. Hall," before going to class.

By 8:30, Hall's task is done, and the students—Taylor and Tyler, McLean and Madison—have scampered off to begin the school day. How many hands has Hall shaken? He's been head master at Calvert for 17 years, and the school under his leadership has taught an average of 380 K-6 students for 170 days a year. That is just over a million handshakes.

This morning ceremony isn't just another fusty old prep school ritual. It's symbolic of how Calvert presents its students with a contemporary yet firmly traditional education, one that tells the student that what he does in school is important.

But Calvert isn't just a very good day school. It is transforming itself into what Hall likes to call an "educational services center." Its Home Instruction Department is the leading provider of nonsectarian home school courses in the world, a force that is

Calvert School head master Merrill Hall with a student.

"Calvertizing" tens of thousands of students from Timbuktu to Tokyo. Calvert is also just beginning to enter the lucrative educational textbook market.

Like many schools, Calvert has had to adjust its curriculum to current social trends. Drug and sex education classes were introduced in the mid-1980s. In 1995, the school was rewired for computers; today, Calvert is so tech-friendly that its sixth graders write their compositions on Dell Inspiron laptops, e-mailing them to their teacher over the school's intranet. And with each new class the number of students who play soccer rises, while the number going out for football falls.

Yet beneath these changes the school's bedrock remains amazingly unaltered. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man," and in Calvert's case one man is its founder, Virgil Hillyer. "Virgil Hillyer is alive and well at Calvert," says Sally Campbell of Calvert's Home Instruction Department. "There isn't a day that goes by that someone doesn't talk about Hillyer in some way."

Hillyer came to Calvert in 1899, three years after the school opened. It was an age where schools were experimenting with John Dewey's "progressive" or "child-centered" theories of education, which held that schools should adapt their curricula to satisfy children's presumed needs. By contrast, notes Calvert School's official historian, Margaret Worrall, Hillyer "believed that elementary school education must concentrate on the mastery of reading, spelling, and arithmetic, and that the best method of mastery was through drill, hard work, and more drill."

Hillyer, adds Merrill Hall, "happened to believe what E.D. Hirsch [of *Cultural Literacy* fame] believes now—that without a certain body of knowledge, you're out of the conversation." But Hillyer wasn't just a "drill and skill" drudge. He believed the task of acquiring knowledge could provide pleasure as well as some pain. He wrote several books expressing his ideas, but the one that has burned brightest over the years is *A Child's History of the World*, a charming, often humorous, deeply humane introduc-

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tion to world history first published in 1924 and still in print (lightly revised) today. *A Child's History* has inspired countless children to study the past. "Today Show" movie critic Gene Shalit once wrote Calvert to say he was given the volume as a ninth birthday present and "no other book I have read in any period of my life has had so profound an effect on me as has that book, which I still have at my bedside and which I cherish."

Hillyer's legacy to Calvert goes beyond his many books. Several of his educational techniques are widely used. Hillyer was a firm believer in penmanship, and Calvert students still learn to write neatly and precisely. For decades, the graduation ceremony has included a section where all graduates sign their names on a plaque which is hung in the Calvert lobby. The first names may have changed, but the Marcias and Harolds of the class of 1940 and the Brittanys and Ethans of the class of 2000 sign their names in strikingly similar scripts.

Another Hillyer legacy is the "folder," a thick black binder that collects each student's compositions. There is a row of them behind Merrill Hall's desk, and he pulls down several for first-graders. The one for 1915 begins with a student completing sentences beginning with "I see a ____" and ending with a simple composition. So does the one for 1924. And 1943. And 2000.

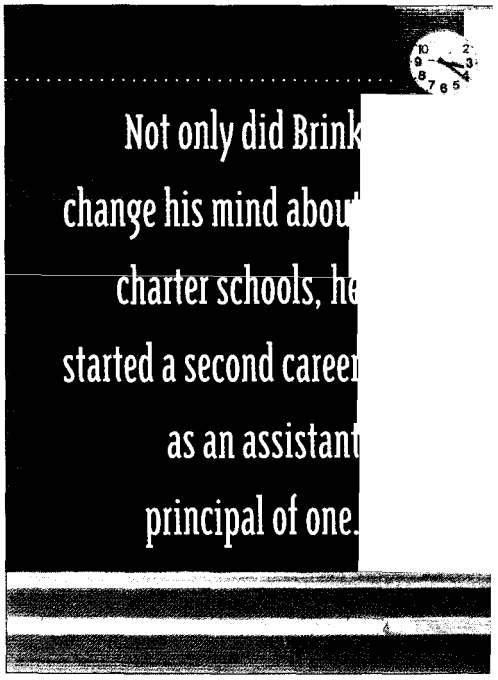
The folders, like the morning handshake, tell the student his work is important—so important that it's going to be saved, preserved, and read by adults for decades. But as Johns Hopkins education researcher Sam Stringfield observes, the folders also provide vital clues to a child's educational development—a way for teachers to quickly assess how well a student is progressing, and what his long-term strengths and weaknesses are. "The idea of folders is thousands of years old," Stringfield says, "but it's an idea Calvert has perfected."

But Hillyer's most lasting legacy to his successors is the Calvert Home Instruction Department or HID, which has been a division of Calvert since 1906. Two stories are told of the department's origins. One says it began during a contagious epidemic, when Calvert teachers sent lessons home for an extended period. The more plausible account is that Hillyer saw that selling Calvert's courses would bring in extra money for the struggling school.

Merrill Hall understandably keeps the precise numbers hazy, but he says the HID is so lucrative that he receives letters from venture capitalists three times a year with offers to buy the division, all of which are turned down. If the HID did not exist, Calvert would have to raise tuition $5,000 per student above the current level of $10-$12,000.

The Home Instruction Department has made Calvert's name known around the world. As early as 1909, Calvert courses were being sent to students in 40 states and ten countries. By 1950, Calvert School courses were the preferred method of teaching children who weren't able to attend a more traditional school. If a child's parents were sent overseas—as missionaries, explorers, soldiers, diplomats, businessmen, spies—it's likely the child was taught with Calvert materials, which were also the curriculum of choice for young performers in films or on the stage.

The travails of some Calvert HID students were legendary. During World War II, Calvert materials somehow made their way to a Japanese POW camp. And if every school has had a student who claimed the dog ate her homework, only Calvert HID has had a student who apologized for her homework being late because the lions kept her awake at night.



"We're all over the globe," says Sally Campbell, who markets Calvert HID's curriculum. "We've dropped curricula off of airplanes and taken it in by dogsled." In 1980, HID had about 6,000 students, about 20 percent in the U.S. and 80 percent overseas. Then Calvert encountered something really interesting: the budding U.S. homeschooling movement.

Merrill Hall became Calvert head master in 1983, and in the 1984-85 school year he began to notice a rising number of orders for Calvert materials from families located all across the U.S. who were dissatisfied with the public schools. It wasn't a trend anyone at Calvert anticipated. The number of students in the Home Instruction Department continued to soar, reaching 23,000 in the 2000-01 school year. Just over 21,000 of these students are in the U.S., the rest overseas.

Calvert's homeschooling curriculum is so successful for several reasons. It appeals to parents who want a moral but nonsectarian curriculum. It also appeals because Calvert's courses are rigorous, traditional, and based on the classics. In sixth grade, for example, a student studies great children's books like *King Arthur and His Knights* and *Swiss Family Robinson*. There are also courses in spelling, composition, grammar, introductory algebra, science (including space, electricity, and genetics), poetry "from 1800 to the present day," world history, and geography. Art history, introductory French and Spanish, and ancient history are optional. "These are hard courses," Merrill Hall says. "You can't just slide by."

The existence of the Calvert day school gives Calvert homeschool courses a competitive advantage. The day school serves as a testing laboratory. And because it is fully accredited, Calvert programs easily pass muster with even the most finicky state homeschooling regulators.

Moreover, Calvert tries to make sure that the students in the Home Instruction Department are a community. They offer a pen pal club, where HID students can write each other. There's also a store which sells all sorts of stuff: pennants, backpacks, teddy bears.

Another important way Calvert HID tries to be a real school is in its Advisory Teaching Service (ATS). For an additional $300 a year, Calvert parents can send lessons to Baltimore (by regular mail or e-mail), where they are graded by an actual teacher who is also available for instructional advice. Through this method, Calvert home-

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schoolers also get transcripts which high schools routinely accept.

Virgil Hillyer, writes Calvert historian Archibald Hart, believed "the Home Instruction pupil must be able to feel that, though remote perhaps 10,000 miles from Baltimore, he is a part of a class of real children, and that a single and sympathetic teacher is interested in his progress throughout the year."

Today, the advisory teachers don't just make students happy, they're also able to provide parents with feedback from an experienced professional. The school has a ready supply of retired and burned-out Baltimore public school teachers eager to join the ATS. By advising ten homeschoolers, a retired Calvert teacher can provide a nice supplement to her pension. By guiding 120, a teacher in prime form can experience all the pleasure of watching students learn without enduring any school bureaucracy.

How popular is the Calvert curriculum? Here are some snapshots:

• Back in 1990, the Baltimore public schools introduced Calvert materials into one of their elementary schools—over furious opposition from the Baltimore Teachers Union, which claimed that teaching the Calvert way was too much work. After test scores dramatically improved, Calvert's curriculum was added to two other schools in Baltimore and one charter school in Washington, D.C. Each of these schools has a full-time employee to make sure the classes meet Calvert standards.

• This school year, 28 charter schools in California signed up with Calvert, thanks to a change in state law which allowed charter schools to offer distance-learning curricula.

• In 2000, 18 other independent schools nationwide, as well as 46 homeschooling cooperatives, began offering Calvert materials in their classrooms.

• Calvert is the preferred curriculum at seven schools created by corporations (the biggest of which is Raytheon) for employees' children.

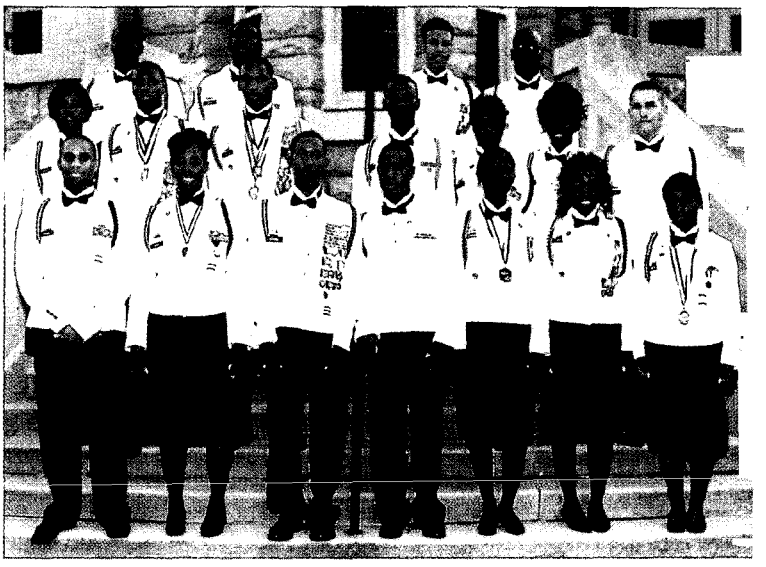
• Calvert is used by 25 English-language schools in four countries overseas. In Brazil, the American Chamber of Commerce is leading a major effort to expand Calvert-based curricula.

What comes next? Well, the day school is beginning the process of expanding to grades seven and eight. Because the move will mean demolishing a nearby apartment complex, it is controversial among Calvert's not-in-my-backyard neighbors, who have formed one of the nation's more genteel picket lines in protest. "Fighting Calvert is like fighting the king of England," says one of them, Patty Mead.

Calvert is also entering the commercial textbook market. In 1997, they acquired the rights to a math textbook that was dropped when two major textbook publishers merged. Calvert then spent the next three years testing and refining the book among their Baltimore students. In the fall of 2000, they offered the K-4 math curriculum to school boards nationwide. Grade 5-8 textbooks will be marketed this spring.

In these ways, Calvert's hard-nosed but deeply humane curriculum continues to expand. And while his brave-new-world educational contemporaries are largely forgotten, Virgil Hillyer's ideas remain vibrantly alive.

—Martin Morse Wooster



Graduating students at the Franklin Military School.

Franklin Military School

Richmond, Virginia

"We teach moral courage," the Franklin Military School teacher said matter-of-factly, as if it were the sort of comment that commonly rolls off the tongue of public school teachers in Richmond and elsewhere. To justify his unusual claim, Mr.—er, make that "Major"—Rakestraw handed your reporter the school's "Disciplinary Referral" sheet, which cadets fill out to inform authorities of improper conduct by their peers.

There are 26 separate offenses that may be ticked, including Uniform/Grooming Violation; Improper Use of Internet; Possession of Communication Devices (Beeper, Walkman, etc.); Disruptive Conduct; Possession, Exhibition, or Dissemination of Obscene Materials; Military Protocol Violation; and Misbehaving on School Bus. Cadets are taught to have the moral courage to resist peer pressure, Rakestraw explains, and to insist that all students behave honorably.

Sergeant Gary McCray, who oversees most of the disciplining at Franklin, says that in his six years there he's seen no negative repercussions among students from this mutual policing of their honor code—which is the same as West Point's: "A cadet will not lie, cheat, or steal, or tolerate those who do."

Clearly, this is not your typical inner-city public high school. It is a public high school, however, and it succeeds with an inner-city clientele. Moreover, its methods are neither outlandish or especially difficult, and could easily be duplicated elsewhere.

Franklin Military School was established in 1980 as an "alternative" high school within the Richmond city system. It has some control over admissions, but in practice the student body is overwhelmingly black, mostly lower-middle-class to poor, and usually living with one parent or none. Students with particularly bad grades and discipline records are unlikely to be admitted, but last year the school accepted roughly 70 out of 100 applicants.

Enrollees are rarely academic stars. Like most public city schools, Franklin is having a hard time getting all its students to pass Vir-

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ginia's tough new Standards of Learning tests (although it was cited this fall as one of Richmond's most improved schools in all subject areas, and surpassed most schools in writing and algebra).

By the most basic indicator of success in education, however—do kids go on to a productive life?—Franklin boasts a track record nearly all Richmond public schools would envy: In a typical year, about a quarter of all graduates enter the military, or business; the other three-quarters continue on to higher education.

The city doesn't lavish resources on Franklin. Its roughly 180 students are housed inside a larger standard high school, Armstrong, which has about 700 students of its own. Franklin has 13 teachers, including three retired Army personnel who conduct the only unusual part of its required curriculum: mandatory Junior ROTC classes for all students. The remaining teachers are regular public school instructors in English, math, etc. While Franklin classes are separate from Armstrong classes, extracurriculars like sports are commingled. (Though Franklin comprises only one-fifth of the total school population, it supplies half the football team's starters and comparable proportions of the track team, band, etc.) Both schools operate under Principal Howard Hopkins.

The building is not in a great neighborhood. A couple years ago an Armstrong teacher and a volunteer were shot, and even successful Franklin alums are occasionally killed in the city's violent streets.

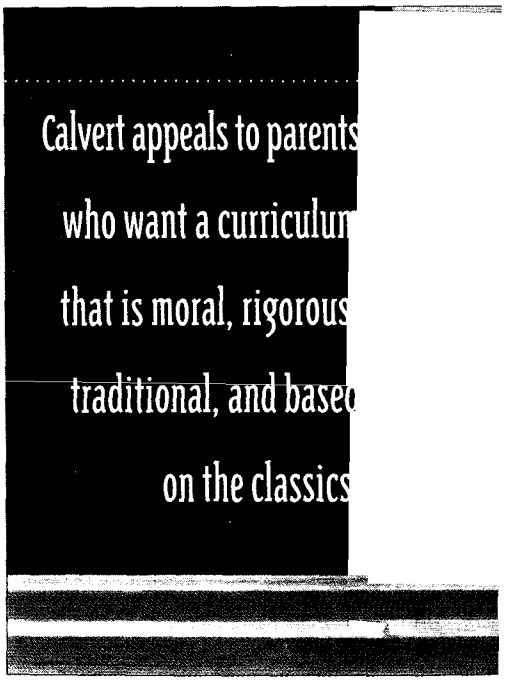
Students are issued JROTC uniforms, which they wear daily. The school day begins at 7:15 with formation, where students form into a "battalion" of four "companies," recite the Pledge of Allegiance and the Cadet Creed, observe a moment of silence, and hear "orders of the day." This morning they're reminded that all seniors are expected to take the SATs. Then they're asked to volunteer two hours on Thanksgiving to serve dinner to the homeless, and to bring in cans for the school's food drive.

Sergeant McCray adds, in a bellowing voice, "Use your tact to let us know if a fellow cadet needs one of our food baskets." Then he shouts the question, "Are you motivated?!" Despite the screamed response "Yes, Sergeant, sir!" McCray has the formation drop to the ground with him for the additional motivation of ten push-ups. Then they're back on their feet shouting another response, before being taken back to the ground for a bit more inspiration.

Latoya Fraser's story is classic. The poised young woman, dressed in her ROTC camouflage uniform, is taking time out from her senior year at Virginia Commonwealth University to visit her old high school. She'll soon be commissioned as an Army officer specializing in computer systems, but she had no inkling of all this back when she was struggling in middle school. "I had an attitude problem," she explains, "and my mother made a bargain with me: Try one year at Franklin and you can go to any school you like after that."

"Though I didn't like that first year," she recalls, "I made it through with no bloodshed, and ended up staying a second year and enjoyed it." In her third year she really shined, and much to her surprise she became battalion commander—the highest-ranking cadet in the school—and was graduated as valedictorian as well. She's happy her brother is now a tenth grader at Franklin, her sister a ninth grader.

The school's secret? "I ultimately learned, 'Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you.' If you want to be respected, you have to learn how to respect others. You have to learn to be a follower before you can become a leader." The school's traditional military structure, in which students begin at the bottom and have a chance to work their way up the chain of command, teaches just that.



But isn't the military about violence and war, not education? What's the big idea of handing inner-city kids rifles, even if they're non-functioning ones for a color guard?

If you ask Franklin teachers such questions, they'll recite their strict safety regulations covering the use of target guns used by the rifle team, assure you that although every Franklin student must join the Junior ROTC while there, none are required to go any further in the military and in fact most go to college, not boot camp. Finally, the teachers point to the big banners posted in classrooms: "The JROTC Mission: To Motivate Students To Be Better Citizens." In other words, *not* soldiers.

Latoya puts it more simply: "This environment does not teach you to kill. It does not teach you violence. It teaches you discipline. And in the long run, everybody needs discipline. These days kids are beating teachers up, they are harming each other." They need to "learn self-respect, have a little pride, and learn how to work with others building a team. That's what the military is all about." They also need "to learn how to say 'Yes sir' and 'Yes ma'am' to succeed in the business world. Without Franklin I'd still be saying, 'Yeah' and 'nuh-huh.'"

Students echo the teamwork theme: "Franklin works like a family—all for one." Major Towns, school commandant, tells how one young man learned self-respect just two weeks earlier. Like most Franklin students, the fellow has not grown up with the stereotypical suburban parents who assure their child he is the center of the universe and can achieve anything he wants. Nor is it likely any institution in the youth's life, especially his previous schools, ever expected much from him.

At Franklin, Major Towns explains, the young man had one foot aimed in the right direction and one aimed for ruin. So when the big Miss Gold Bowl competition rolled around and Towns had to select a cadet to escort last year's winner out in front of thousands of spectators, he decided to give this young man the nod. "He was nervous: 'I'm not sure I can do it, sir.'" Towns assured him he would be fine. "Just stick your chest out and remember—you're representing Franklin."

And so he had his moment in the spotlight, then rushed home to watch himself on the TV news. Since then, Towns and Principal Hopkins have observed a real change in the young man, once poised on the knife's edge of life, now marching proudly in the right direction.

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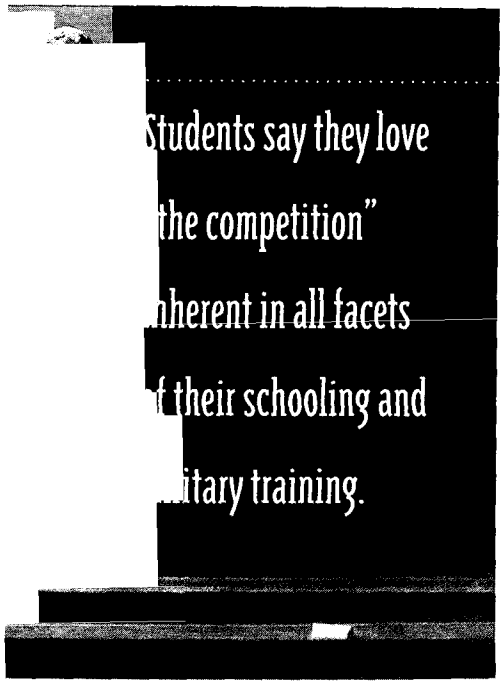

Similar stories abound when you canvass the students. *TAE* didn't find one who liked the Franklin way when he or she began. But once they start to internalize the discipline, once they have reasons to be proud because of higher ranks won, ribbons and medals earned, they can grow to like school so much the instructors have to force them to leave the grounds at the end of the day.

Indeed, talks with beaming upperclassmen quickly explode numerous myths of "progressive" education. The students say they love "the competition" inherent in all facets of their schooling. They thrive on rankings for both military and academic activities, proudly explaining how one medal dangling on their chest is for a school subject, another for marksmanship.

The students develop this self-respect without any "self-esteem" pabulum. Gary McCray is six feet of black, burly, shaved-head, loudspeaker-voiced Army drill sergeant. He's the JROTC instructor charged with taking new students through their six transformative weeks of "Rat" season, modeled after the Virginia Military Institute's famously grueling initiation. "I give them the invitation to leave all the time: 'Leave! Go to your old school. We don't want you here. You want to be a quitter, then quit! But if you want to be part of a winning school and better your life, then you need to stay. If you can't hack it, please go.'"

Laughing at this ancient drill instructor trick, McCray adds, "The majority of them stay just so they can say, 'He's not going to run me out! I'll show him!' After that, I've got them hooked." And while parents often develop cold feet—"Momma gets tired of hearing, 'Mommy, I can't do it, they're picking on me'"—the typical Rat season sees only five to ten students out of around 70 give up.

After passing the Rat tests, the student becomes a Franklin Knight. As freshman Valencia Simmons says, "A Rat is temporary, but a Knight is forever. I hope to make battalion commander in my senior year."

The watchwords of the school are *structure, discipline, grooming, dress code, competition, character.* The students, once they get over their shock, find these things are not difficult. "The discipline is fair," says Ryan Davis, the third of three brothers to attend. Toure Thaniel agrees. She assures *TAE* her instructors aren't petty tyrants: "We're not told what to do" every minute. Instead, "we bring consequences on ourselves"—which seems just right to her. "I want to make my parents proud," she explains.

Discipline at Franklin typically means doorknob duty, where offenders polish doorknobs at the school, or doing ten push-ups, or writing an essay apologizing to a peer one has wronged, promising not to repeat the offense.

It's the usual story with Racquel Frierson: "I didn't like the first year. I didn't want to listen." Now she's enjoying her second year as commander of the Color Guard. Franklin shows the colors at as many as 100 competitions and public functions a year. As Towns tries to count up last year's events, a letter arrives from the Governor requesting an honor guard for an upcoming Awards Banquet.

Any observer can see that Franklin Military School, by adding a dash of JROTC discipline to a standard high school mix, turns around a lot of lives that might otherwise go sour. A mere three retired Army men serve almost 200 students. Yet thanks to the anti-military "progressivism" that has a stranglehold on most of the public school establishment, this simple, commonsensical idea is almost untried elsewhere. Only one other public school, in Chicago, is beginning to experiment with such a project.

Richmond parents, though, are catching on, as seen by the number of current students whose siblings or other relatives previously attended Franklin. Sergeant Swain, a Vietnam vet on the faculty from the beginning, takes pride in a student today who can boast of both parents' attendance.

Principal Hopkins lauds Franklin students' discipline as a good influence on Armstrong High students. And *discipline,* he adds, means far more than just punishment for misdeeds: "It means doing what you're supposed to do, when and where you're supposed to do it. When students do something because it's the right thing to do, that lasts for years."

One suspects that even a two-lawyer family sending their child to Phillips Exeter Academy for tens of thousands a year might become misty eyed listening to Ryan Davis's medals jingle as he tells a reporter earnestly, "What's the hardest thing about Franklin? *Doing the right thing at all times!*"

—Scott Walter

Benjamin Franklin Charter Schools

Mesa, Arizona

The intersection of Lehi and Horne Roads in Mesa, Arizona (a large suburb of Phoenix) is ground zero for the charter school revolution. An appropriate site, for the area is rich in American frontier history.

Back in 1995, some residents concluded that the local public schools were failing to meet their children's needs. "My wife and I had been active in education issues for a decade," explained Eddie Farnsworth, now executive director of the Benjamin Franklin Charter Schools (BFCS). The Farnsworths were particularly concerned about a weak curriculum, and a lack of moral values. "Patriotism didn't exist. Gangs were terrorizing the kids. Scores were low. School materials were inappropriate."

In 1994, Arizona's state legislature passed a revolutionary charter school law that allowed education spending to follow the student wherever he or she goes—even to the new charter schools (government funded, but run by persons or organiza-

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tions independent of the public school district) that began to be set up across the state. When a public school loses a student to a charter school, an economic signal is sent. And this competition has provided a powerful incentive for even old-line public schools to change their ways, as we will see.

A year after the new law passed, Farnsworth and his band of pioneers set up one of the first charter schools in Arizona in their Lehi neighborhood. The first Ben Franklin School was five unpretentious modular buildings plunked down behind a local museum. The schoolchildren displaced some grazing sheep, but left undisturbed a few raucous chicken coops located on vacant land a couple hundred feet away.

School opened in the fall of 1995 with 139 students. By year's end, enrollment had risen to 192. Rapidly, two sister Ben Franklin schools opened in Queen Creek and Gilbert. They met with similar success and soon similar waiting lists. Today, more than 1,300 students are enrolled in the three BFCS campuses.

The Lehi school, while aesthetically spartan, is efficient and even quaint. In the center of the modular buildings is a courtyard covered with large, saltillo red tiles on which the children assemble at the start of the day for the Pledge of Allegiance. Old Glory is raised on a flagpole in a ceremony right out of "Little House on the Prairie." This particular morning, the children join their teacher in a chorus of "God Bless the U.S.A." The children then bid salutations to their teachers in various languages and trot off to their classes while doing counting exercises. Once in class, the children are immersed in a back-to-basics curriculum that stresses phonics for reading and writing, rigorous instruction in mathematics and science, and history lessons that rely on more patriotic interpretations of America's past than one often finds in today's the-Founders-were-bigots textbooks.

Principal Debra Stoddard believes that her school's "big advantage is our atmosphere. Because we're smaller, we can meet students' needs in a more caring manner." Parents clearly believe the school is serving their children well: An October 1999 survey of parents with children in charter schools found that BFCS-Lehi scored highest in parent satisfaction. Moreover, the school's test scores equal or exceed those of the Mesa District's top-performing schools, and are more than *double* those of public schools in the Lehi neighborhood.

The Ben Franklin schools, and Arizona's myriad other charter schools, have had a dramatic (and in some cases devastating) impact on surrounding old-style schools. Mesa's public schools have lost some 5,000 students to charters. This hemorrhaging recently prompted the district to establish more magnet schools with a traditional curriculum, start school programs friendly to home-schooled children, and even to begin advertising heavily in local newspapers and theaters.

In Queen Creek, a mushrooming old mining town, fully one-third of the city's 600 students emigrated to charter schools. The Queen Creek school district ended up firing its superintendent, adding phonics to the curriculum, and, like Mesa, resorting to the ultimate humiliation of purchasing advertising. Kent Matheson, former superintendent of Flagstaff Public Schools, admits, "In order to survive, we had to quit our whining and do a better job ourselves." Likewise, Robert Meko, principal of a Mesa elementary school, confesses that "charter schools make us look at ourselves and see what we can do better." Dixie Parrish, who teaches at a different Mesa elementary school, tells reporters she's "convinced she wouldn't enjoy so much freedom" today without the new "competitive atmosphere."

Larry Likes, a public school superintendent in the East Valley, has really seen the light. Though he says he was "as big a 'crybaby' as anyone when charters first emerged," he not only made reforms in his own domain, but also decided to sponsor charter schools outside his district. While his own district is poor and small, with students only numbering in the hundreds, he now oversees thousands of charter students in dozens of schools elsewhere in Arizona. The fees he's collected have brought him a new principal and tens of thousands of dollars for computers and other equipment.

In the half-decade since charter schools opened their doors in Arizona, their enrollments have soared from approximately 7,000 to over 50,000. And whenever charter schools appear in a neighborhood, they set off a ripple of competition in nearby school districts anxious to retain their students. Mary Gifford, vice president of the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools, has identified four classic stages to this reaction by school administrators: (1) advertising; (2) the "red carpet treatment" by teachers and administrators for parents considering charter schools; (3) attacking charter schools through lawsuits and "planning-and-zoning nightmares"; and lastly, (4) changes in the actual school culture, such as introducing phonics.

When hundreds of students left Phoenix's Roosevelt School District for charter schools, superintendent John Baracy said it was "a wake-up call." A spokesman for Queen Creek's elementary school says they switched to a back-to-basics curriculum "to stem the flow of students" to charters.

Parents certainly seem happy with the new conditions. The largest poll ever done on the subject found that over 70 percent of Arizona parents of charter schoolchildren say they plan to re-enroll. About two-thirds of these parents gave their schools grades of A+ or A. Only one-fourth said their kids' previous school rated an A.

One parent surprised by all the change is Ronda West in Gilbert. She gave up on regular public schools after a parents' group she helped launch, though it was hundreds strong, failed to convince local bureaucrats to open a back-to-basics school. So she sent her children to the East Valley BFCS, only to have the school district relent in fall 1999 and open a new traditional school. School board member Linda Ford-Rollans confessed, "When you see families that are choosing alternative schools because we're not meeting the needs, we have to do that."

Many of the state's charter schools serve students who've been let down in other places. Betty Matwick, who taught for over a decade in an East Valley public school, switched to a charter school job in Mesa. She now tells the *Arizona Republic*, "You could not get me to go back to a traditional school," adding that at-risk students are definitely better off in her new surroundings. "Well-to-do parents of successful youngsters are not likely to enroll their progeny in new, unproven schools that have not yet established firm reputations," notes a Hudson Institute study. "The families streaming into charter schools are plenty needy, and

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many of their children have been poorly served elsewhere."

As the sweeping changes brought by school competition unsettle school districts, Farnsworth is pleased to see that his school, and others following the same traditionalist prescriptions, are shaking up the establishment. "Ben Franklin opens up and we see all these changes," he observes good-naturedly. "We just try to give the children a well-grounded, solid, foundational education."

In the process, they have given Arizona something else—a potent dose of free market medicine against educational sclerosis.

—Andrew Peyton Thomas and the editors

Marva Collins Preparatory School

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Principal Robert Rauh and students of the Marva Collins Preparatory School.

At first, it's surprising to see Marva Collins on a list of today's top educational reformers. "Wasn't she active in the 1970s?" you might ask.

True, Collins has been reforming schools for a very long time. She opened Westside Prep (now the Marva Collins Preparatory School) in Chicago in 1975. The "60 Minutes" piece which made her a national celebrity aired in 1979. The TV movie (starring Cicely Tyson) appeared in 1981.

Collins is no longer actively running schools; she's an educational consultant living in Hilton Head, South Carolina. But the "Marva Collins Way"—where students work hard reading classic works of literature—is still thriving at five schools. Cincinnati has one, Chicago three, including Marva Collins Prep, headed by daughter Cynthia. And in 1997, the Marva Collins Preparatory School of Wisconsin opened its doors in Milwaukee.

Ron Sadoff brought the Marva Collins Way to Milwaukee. He saw a 1996 "60 Minutes" update on their 1979 piece. The reporters located 33 of the 34 students profiled in the 1979 story and found they were either in graduate school or working in responsible jobs—teachers, police officers, Army officers. A statistician consulted by "60 Minutes" calculated that the typical Chicago classroom of 1979 would now have one person in prison, five on welfare, and one who was murdered. But all of the Collins students were still alive, none were in jail, none were on welfare.

Sadoff, who made his fortune as an investment manager, wanted to help poor people in Milwaukee. But he didn't want to be a passive donor who simply wrote checks; he wanted to make sure his money was improving lives. "I had concluded that education was the way to go," Sadoff recalls, and after viewing the CBS broadcast he knew he wanted a Marva Collins school.

Sadoff went to Chicago, visited classes at Marva Collins Prep, and talked to Collins herself. "I told her, 'I'm not leaving here until I get a license,'" he says. But Sadoff found Collins was picky about which schools would bear her name. At the height of her fame 20 years ago, a Texas entrepreneur offered Collins $100 million to open 20 Marva Collins schools—and Collins turned the Texan down, because she did not want her name on institutions she could not personally oversee.

Eventually attorneys thrashed out a 20-page licensing agreement which ensured that the Marva Collins Preparatory School of Milwaukee follows the Marva Collins method. Meanwhile Sadoff found other philanthropists willing to assist him, most notably Junior Bridgeman, a one-time Milwaukee Bucks star who now owns a dozen fast-food restaurants. Bridgeman is so dismayed with the poor quality of the people he hires that he holds mandatory prep sessions before the work day to teach his employees the skills they should have learned in school. So he was eager to help provide local children with a sound education.

Shortly thereafter, Sadoff found his principal, Robert Rauh. Rauh had taught in a wide variety of settings, ranging from a posh suburban Milwaukee prep school to inner-city schools in Los Angeles. In 1989, Rauh won a fellowship to Columbia University's Teachers College, where he did his master's thesis on school vouchers. "The day before I defended my thesis," Rauh recalled, "I read that school choice was coming to Milwaukee."

Rauh has been a school choice pioneer ever since. In 1991, he became principal of the Urban Day School, the oldest nonsectarian private school in Milwaukee and an early recipient of school choice funds. But Rauh leaped at the chance to build his own school. "I was always a huge Marva Collins fan," Rauh says. "Here was an opportunity to create a school from ground zero."

Sadoff and Rauh immediately developed an excellent working relationship. Sadoff is the school's major donor, and both he and his wife Micky serve on the school's board. Sadoff talks to Rauh regularly, and visits the school at least once a week, helping children practice their reading. But Sadoff gives Rauh the authority he needs to do his job. "The school is only as good as its principal," Sadoff says, "and Rob is phenomenal."

The Marva Collins school is located in a former Catholic school in the Metcalfe Park neighborhood on Milwaukee's west side. The area has its share of both saints and sinners; the New Covenant Baptist Church on nearby North Street is only a few blocks away from Dot's House of Joy. But the neighborhood is slowly getting better. A block away from Marva Collins, a Jewel

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Supermarket and Osco Drugstore—the first in the area in decades—are under construction.

The Marva Collins Preparatory School of Wisconsin opened in 1997 as a charter school. But a dispute over paperwork led the school to become a private school that accepts vouchers. This has disadvantages. While charter schools receive $6,500 per child from the state of Wisconsin, a voucher-accepting private school only receives $5,300 per child, and only children whose parents have incomes up to 175 percent of the poverty line are eligible. Charter schools can be somewhat selective about admissions; voucher schools must accept anyone who applies, holding a random drawing if applicants outnumber slots available. While charters receive four checks a year from the state, voucher school parents have to certify to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction every quarter that their children are attending a voucher school. Since there are 300 students at Marva Collins, this means the school must await 1,200 separate annual checks.

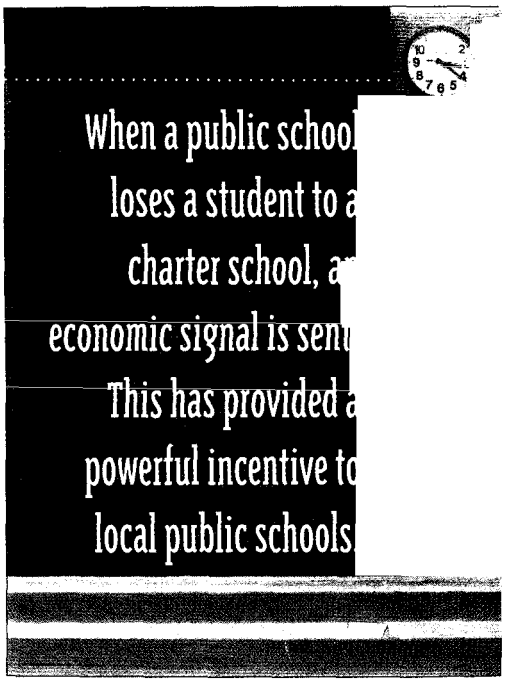
But there are also many advantages to being a private school. Rauh has total freedom to fill jobs as he thinks best. The cafeteria, for example, is subcontracted to a local restaurateur, who provides healthier meals at a lower cost than the school itself could. The school also contracts with specialist teachers; instead of a typical physical education class, Marva Collins Prep brings in experts to teach ballet and *tae kwon do*. And a science teacher at the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee) comes in a few times a year to present students with "Bill Nye the Science Guy"-style wizardry.

Rauh's biggest advantage lies in hiring whatever teachers he thinks most effective. He uses financial incentives to reward those whose children do well on tests and have good attendance records. While the school gets its teachers from various sources, many are refugees from Milwaukee public schools. Third-grade teacher Jay Brown, for example, was an eighth-grade teacher in the public schools who grew tired of orders from the city school bureaucracy to promote children regardless of whether they were learning. Brown says attendance records were routinely fudged in her old school to make them artificially high. Nor did any supervisor ever give her any advice on how well she was doing or how she could improve her teaching.

Brown, from Chicago, had read Collins's books. Last January, she told herself, "I can't do this to children any more. So I called the school and said, 'Do you have any openings?' And Rob Rauh said, 'Did you know we were placing an ad?'" Brown is happier at Marva Collins Prep than ever before in her career.

The school curriculum is a mélange of several proven methods for teaching elementary school children. Direct Instruction is used in the early grades, particularly in teaching phonics. The math curriculum is the Saxon series, well-regarded for its rigor and simplicity and very popular among homeschoolers today. The school also has Core Knowledge textbooks, though they are used more as references than as active parts of the curriculum. William Bennett's anthologies are also used; the kindergartners study *The Children's Book of Heroes*, and *The Book of Virtues* is used as a textbook, beginning in the second grade.

But the Marva Collins Way comes into full force in the reading curriculum. From the day a child enters the school, he is studying classic texts in Open Court readers, the most traditional of the standard elementary school texts. The week I visited, the kindergartners were working their way through *Aesop's Fables*. The third graders were studying Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poetry. The fifth graders were starting to read *The Tempest*.



The students are barraged by inspirational maxims, sayings, and pithy quotations coming from Aristotle to contemporary motivational masters. A fifth-grade classroom has 24 quotations posted on its walls, from Ralph Waldo Emerson, Samuel Johnson, Martin Luther King, Ovid, Benjamin Franklin, even craft-movement advocate Elbert Hubbard. Few elementary school students elsewhere know anything about Virgil, but Marva Collins Prep fifth-graders know that he said "Fortune favors the bold."

Many modern motivational techniques are used as well. Everyone at Marva Collins Prep has to write a mission statement. (Robert Rauh's promises "to be true to myself in all decisions and actions I take" and to "be honest in my daily reflections with my Creator.") Students are instructed in Stephen Covey-ish techniques for considering "Other People's Views" (OPV) and "Choices and Consequences" (CC). And every day, class begins with a recitation of "The Creed." Here are some of its 22 clauses:

"I was born to win if I do not spend too much time trying to fail."

"I have the right to fail, but I do not have the right to take my teacher and other people with me."

"God made me the captain of one life, my own."

Jay Brown recalls that when she was in Milwaukee public schools, "We always had 'don't do this' discipline rules. But here we say, 'Here's what you should do.' It makes us more compassionate." Fourth-grade teacher Jillian Zacher notes that there is useful consistency. "In every single classroom we are all teaching the same values every day." Even the kindergartners Allyson Reynoso supervises are absorbing lessons. When someone makes a bad choice on the playground, kids will say, "You're not doing CC!" Reynoso also finds the moral lessons she teaches in school are practical ones she can use at home to tame her rambunctious two-year-old.

It's too early to tell how well Marva Collins Prep students are doing. Iowa Test scores administered in April show that all students are well above the national average in math and reading. And because students at Marva Collins don't get promoted over their heads, but are drilled and re-drilled until it's clear they

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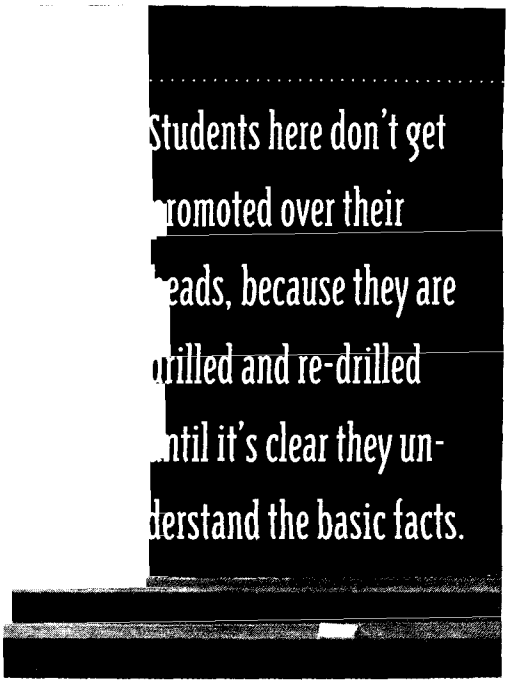

understand basic facts, under 10 percent of the students drop out.

But the school is still growing. Each year since they opened they've added a grade. They've just begun sixth grade and hope to expand to eighth grade by the 2002-03 school year. So no one has graduated from the school yet, and it will be several years before we know how the school's graduates do in high school and in life. But it's clear most of the students are thriving, and being taught by teachers who are free to do their best.

—Martin Morse Wooster

Sale family home school

San Diego, California

My wife Sharon and I and our two kids—John and Christine, 10 and 6—are in our seventh year of homeschooling.

When Christine was born, and John was ready to begin school, we decided Sharon would quit her job to be home. I took a job at a mortgage company and worked from 9 to 5, Monday through Friday. I also played drums professionally every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night, with frequent gigs also on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. We ordered a kindergarten program from the Calvert School in Baltimore, the nation's oldest home curriculum provider, and dived in.

But after two years I was laid off; meanwhile my wife's former boss was pleading for her to return. He offered her three times the amount of money I could command, as well as full insurance coverage for our family, a 401(k) retirement plan, and flexible scheduling to accommodate my out-of-town music playing. We accepted. I came home, she returned to work, and we haven't looked back.

When my wife went back to work, John was beginning second grade at home. He was reading, 'riting, and 'rithmeticking well, and Christine was starting preschool. We've mostly stuck to Calvert's program, which features classical liberal arts along the line of E. D. Hirsch's "core curriculum," although we substituted some intensive phonics books when first teaching our children to read. Calvert skips over printing and begins cursive instruction in the first grade. At third grade the pupil reads great legends, hero stories, and Greek mythology. In the fourth grade they do *A Child's History of the World* a tremendous survey. There are excellent grammar lessons, writing, and readings of classic poetry.

Calvert's math is top notch, and the science is a general program with frequent experiments in each grade. There are also excellent French and Spanish courses. One of the advantages of homeschooling is that you can add or exclude any subject you wish. So along with Calvert's curriculum, John has been learning Latin. All Calvert materials arrive in a large box that includes books, paper, pencils, erasers, art materials, tests, and an extremely clear teacher's manual. You really can't go wrong. The course finishes with the eighth grade, and homeschool guru Mary Pride suggests that by using this program, followed by a few college prep courses, most kids will be ready to take the SATs.

Still, we won't be using Calvert this year, because for some time I've had in mind a more streamlined and personalized curriculum for both kids. John will continue with Latin and Spanish, and use Saxon's excellent math program. Both kids will learn the Greek alphabet, and John will start an introductory logic course. For science we'll continue using general textbooks, read biographies of great scientists, and do occasional experiments using chemistry sets and anything else we find useful. History will be further walks through ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, using the Greenleaf Press materials sold in homeschool catalogues.

Most exciting is the literature we plan to read, including works by Kipling, Poe, C.S. Lewis, Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* and *Wonder Book,* historical novels by G.A. Henty, and selections from Britannica's *Gateway to the Great Books.* Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler, proponents of the Great Books at the University of Chicago, edited this latter set in 1962. I recently heard Adler's Center for the Study of the Great Ideas is close to unveiling their own curriculum for homeschoolers, which is great news.

Our day typically begins at nine o'clock with a reading from the Bible and a chapter from a great book. This past year we read the first two volumes of *The Chronicles of Narnia,* some Grimm's fairy tales, Greek myths, and stories from Collier's *Junior Classics.* Reading together usually ends up in discussion, and here is where we sow the most precious seeds of our family life.

We then move to the academic part of our show, which typically lasts until noon, and takes place at our dining room table. Some days we head for the zoo early in the morning to check on the tigers, and this means we put off school work till the afternoon. If some alternative comes up we may skip the whole day's work, except individual reading time and piano practice.

I often have to set my drums up in the afternoon for a gig that night, and I'll bring the kids along. If I'm hired to play in the afternoon they often join me; if circumstances won't permit, I hire a sitter. We visit libraries and bookstores almost daily. We hike and go to the beach. The kids play with their many friends in the neighborhood—our doors are open continually. They often spend the night at a friend's house or have friends stay at ours.

John was able to go to Africa with his grandmother for two weeks last fall, and we didn't worry about him missing school—southern Africa *was* his school. Both kids practice gymnastics with a large class once a week. Christine takes tap dance lessons; John, piano lessons.

We were well into homeschooling when I read for the first time Josef Pieper's *Leisure, the Basis of Culture.* This book reassured me that we were doing the right thing, for the right reason. Pieper says

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Bob Sale with his children Christine and John.

that real learning and culture is dependent upon leisure, which in turn is dependent upon *cultus*—or divine worship. The Greek word for leisure is the origin for the Latin *scola*, and the English *school*. Our homeschooling days give us time for the unhurried contemplation that is the basis of liberal learning—which Pieper contrasts favorably against the "Servile Arts."

Homeschooling is fairly common today, but for some people it still raises red flags, with visions of reactionaries heading for the hills, children and weapons in tow. Actually, homeschoolers—who now educate perhaps 2 million children—are just bringing education back to a more manageable place. Many of us simply want to avoid what Charles Adams referred to as "those huge, mechanical, educational machines, or mills, as they might more properly be called." And our pupils are winning spelling bees, geography bees, entering the Ivy League, and recording million-selling CDs.

A vast universe of homeschooling material is now available, much of it superb. Every fall I receive several large homeschool catalogues. *The Always Incomplete Resource Guide & Catalog*—primarily Christian oriented—lists nearly 2,000 items. Visit any Barnes & Noble or Borders and you'll find a shelf or more of homeschooling handbooks and curriculum manuals.

There are almost as many methods of homeschooling as there are homeschoolers, and most religions and philosophies have tailored the more popular methods to their needs. There is the Charlotte Mason Method (named for the insightful English educator of 100 years ago); Classical Christian Education; Distance Learning; Unschooling; Montessori (yes, it's available for home); and many others. Turning to a page at random in a homeschooling newsletter, I find a list of support organizations: The American Homeschool Association; Catholic Homeschoolers of Texas; Muslim Home School Network and Resources; Christian Home Educators of California; and Jewish Home Educator's Network. This is only a tiny sampling.

Two resources were indispensable to us: Mary Pride's *Big Book of Home Learning*, and Helen and Mark Hegener's truly inclusive homeschooling journal, *Home Education Magazine*. Mrs. Pride led us to the Calvert program, but she lists and comments upon hundreds of homeschool products, methods, and curriculum providers. Her book explains how to get your homeschooler into college, or if college isn't in the picture, how to find apprenticeships and internships.

The Hegeners' *Home Education Magazine* is the finest general home education magazine. In it you can find articles from Christians and atheists, single parents, and Mormons. The magazine carries an excellent column by Larry and Susan Kaseman, "Taking Charge," which tackles legal and legislative issues, providing a libertarian civics lesson in the process. At the back of each issue is a comprehensive list of homeschool support groups in all 50 states, Australia, Canada, China, Egypt, and England.

I grew up in a liberal family and never questioned the goodness of compulsory public education. But now I have serious qualms about state schooling monopolies. I agree with a critic who argues that "in a free society, government has no more place in education than it has in religion."

Fundamentally, our choice to homeschool was a religious decision, though we have the same concerns most parents have for their children: college, career, and happiness. We want our kids to be cultured and humane. We want them to be filled with wonder every day, and with love for the world. And we think we can do a better job than the public schools of helping them acquire knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.

By homeschooling, we are not disconnecting from society and community. We are reveling in the *greatest part* of our life in community: loving those closest to us.

—Bob Sale

Piney Woods School

Piney Woods, Mississippi

Laurence Jones, the elfin intellectual who founded the Piney Woods School, knew he had trouble coming to him one day in 1917 when a mean-looking man at the head of a lynch mob ordered him to step outside.

Western Mississippi Ku Klux Klan members had decided that the literate, immaculately dressed black man had come to preach at a revival meeting in order to challenge white supremacy. Leading Jones to a clearing in the woods, the Klan members offered The Professor, as most called him, the opportunity to make a final speech. Speaking with what Jones biographer Beth Day describes as "strong, clean words that cut sharply but simply across the curious silence" Jones told the assembled men about his dreams of interracial peace and the education that his agriculture school provided. Pointing to men he knew in the crowd, Jones concluded, "There is not a man standing here who wants to go to his God with the blood of an innocent man on his hands." That moved even the hardened racists. "Let's help the Professah with his school," someone shouted. Before the Klan members returned Jones to the church they had kidnapped him from, they took up a collection, leaving Jones with his life and $50 in cash.

The story of money raised from a lynch mob, recounted in Day's hagiographic 1955 biography *The Little Professor of Piney Woods,* may stretch the truth a bit, but there's little doubt Piney

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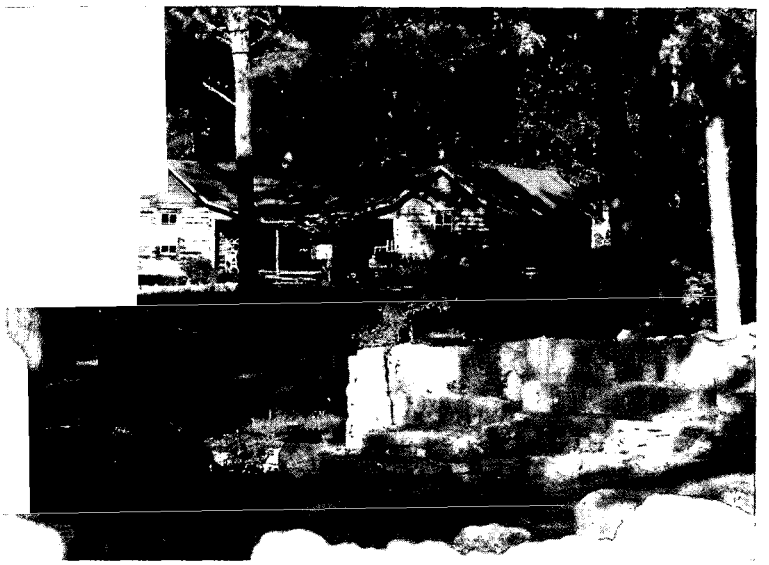

A scene from the campus of The Piney Woods School.

Woods School has an incredible story to tell. The business cards of Piney Woods' teachers and administrators bear the legend "Changing America...One Student at a Time," a mission the school carries out by bringing troubled children into a strict, academically rigorous, pervasively Christian atmosphere.

At one time, Piney Woods would not have seemed all that unusual. Working through churches and farm organizations, black families throughout the Jim Crow South started private boarding schools that focused on literacy, trades, and agriculture. The schools provided a good education at a time when public schools taught blacks little besides obedience to whites. By the early 1950s, about 90 all-black boarding schools existed across the Deep South. But then as public schools desegregated and traditionally white prep schools opened their doors wider, historically black boarding schools withered. Piney Woods, located off a rural highway about 20 miles from Jackson, Mississippi, is the largest and wealthiest of the four historically black boarding schools still in business.

Today with about 300 students, Piney Woods has moved from Jones' vision of a trade and agriculture school toward an emphasis on college preparation for disadvantaged African Americans. About 75 percent of the students come from low-income backgrounds; nearly 80 percent have only one parent at home. "We had one girl who was living in a crack house in Washington," says Dexter Whitley, the school's enrollment and retention manager. A handful of students enter Piney Woods as orphans.

Most students start in ninth grade but the school takes students as early as seventh grade. The largest number of Piney Woods students hail from the deep South, but the school draws students across America and several foreign countries. Most come from inner cities, but the school's growing reputation has attracted more children from affluent backgrounds. Piney Woods gets good results: 95 percent of students go on to college (the rest enter military service), and over 60 percent earn four-year degrees.

Energetic Christianity plays a central role in daily life. Administrators, teachers, and students freely give testimony about how faith changed their lives. "I was brought here by the hand of God," says school president Charles Beady. "I came here to interview with no real plans of accepting, and then I went out with some of the others here to this little church in the woods. The preacher got to preaching, and the guy I'd come with was walking around and shouting. Soon I was too.... I was moved by the Holy Spirit." Each day starts with a devotion service, and a reading from Scripture begins every class. Students have to go to Sunday school to remain in good standing.

Providence alone can't explain the school's success. Piney Woods has survived while other black boarding schools failed thanks to hard work and ingenuity. Founder Jones got the money to start the school from Ed Taylor, a prosperous former slave whose high-interest rate loans and hostility to outsiders gave him a reputation for meanness. While Taylor's $50 gift and 40 acres of land seeded the school, Jones' work built it from an unused sheep shed to a well-kept prep school campus. He held the first classes under a tree.

Working in an environment where almost no blacks had an education beyond the eighth grade, the 5-foot-5 "little professor" carefully cultivated relationships with Jackson's leading white citizens. He eventually convinced them to join Piney Woods' board. He would attend board meetings at all-white private clubs, taking the back stairs so as not to disturb racist sensibilities. In 1954, members of the Jackson Rotary Club arranged for Jones to appear on the top-rated television show "This Is Your Life." Jones spoke movingly about his work at Piney Woods and ended by asking each viewer to send in a dollar to support the school. Within a few weeks over $750,000 came in, providing the basis for an endowment that now stands at over $40 million—almost as much per student as at the Taft School (see page 35). Continued vigorous fundraising allows the school to accept students today without regard to financial need.

Piney Woods spends nearly $30,000 to educate each pupil, but even the best-off families pay only $10,800 in tuition. Students contribute what they can; the poorest among them contribute only $800 a year. To save money and teach good work habits, the school requires every student to work a job for ten hours per week.

A mandate from the board of trustees that the school should particularly help low-income students means academic achievement is not the main factor in admission. "The only essay question we ask is, 'Why do you want to attend Piney Woods?'" explains Whitley. While most students have at least a C average coming into the school, only a few have stellar academic records. "We're looking for kids where we can really make a difference. It isn't our objective to recruit all academic superstars."

Piney Woods focuses on getting these disadvantaged kids to continue their education. "At the public school I would have gone to at home, college is thought of as something people *might* do," explains Valenssia Taplin, a sophomore from McComb, Mississippi. "Here it's something that's just assumed."

Piney Woods' curriculum offers little fluff or flexibility. Students complete a rigid diet of reading, writing, math, science, and foreign language, complemented with a work program and plenty of religion. Aside from a choice of languages (French or Spanish) and some optional science, math, and English courses for the best students, Piney Woods offers few academic electives. "I feel I've gotten good preparation here," says senior Troy Luster. "They make you do the work, and in the end you really feel like you've learned something."

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Earnest Ward, the school's chief academic officer, admits the curriculum could use some improvement. "There are things we could do to offer students more challenges and more choice," he says. The school stopped teaching business courses several years ago during a round of budget cuts, and now offers only three advanced placement courses. Sometimes rigor seems absent. An Algebra I course I sat in on, for example, focused on topics students really should have learned in pre-algebra courses. Language courses stop after three years.

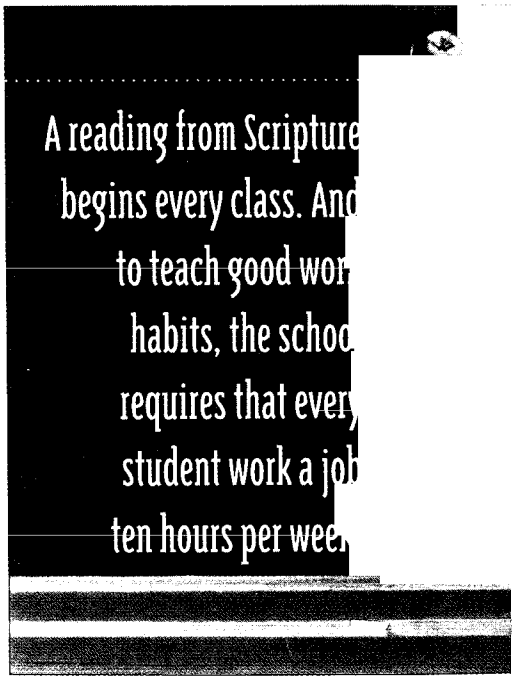
But Piney Woods' curriculum offers many things to admire. To begin with, Afrocentric fairy tales have no place at Piney Woods. "We want to teach history the way it really happened, and English through the best literature," explains Beady, "not just what people want to hear." History classes emphasize but don't overstate the black role in American development, while literature courses mix classics by authors ranging from Zora Neale Hurston to John Knowles.

Piney Woods offers some academic programs that might even serve as national models: Two years of Writing Across the Curriculum classes train freshmen and sophomores in basic composition skills, while the Always Reaching Upward peer tutoring program fruitfully pairs high achievers with sub-par students. The school's Save the Males program mixes tutoring, adult mentors, and special programs focused on black men to boost responsibility and self-confidence, while increasing graduation rates.

Over the years, Piney Woods has de-emphasized vocational training. About ten years ago, the school changed its name from the Piney Woods Country Life School to reflect its emphasis on college preparation rather than agriculture. Under Jones and his successor James Wade (who served as president from 1974-85) students grew nearly all of their own food, built much of the school's physical plant, and, in later years, learned to repair cars for academic credit. Today, the school buys most of its food from outside, and professional construction workers do the pounding and mortaring for the library addition under construction. Piney Woods still retains an air of self-sufficiency: It has its own U.S. Post Office, a student-run thrift store, cow barns, swine pens, sheep fields, a working auto repair shop, and a small motel for visitors. The 500-acre school farm, once the center of the curriculum, now serves as a living laboratory for biology and zoology classes, and Piney Woods students continue to do well in agricultural competitions.

Turning kids from the mean streets into academic achievers requires strict discipline. While men and women mingle freely during free time, the school has many single-sex classes, particularly at the lower levels. Students wear uniforms nearly all the time; showing up in droopy pants or a too-tight top will draw the wrath of administrators. Sex, drinking, and drug use result in more-or-less immediate expulsion; paddling punishes lesser offenses.

When one national publication described Piney Woods offhandedly as "a haven…for troubled black kids" a rejoinder was posted on the school's Web site taking issue with the description. The school didn't object to the "troubled" adjective; it was the "haven" bit administrators and alumni didn't like: "Some readers might feel that you could go to a 'haven' and continue with your bad habits of a previous lifestyle. Piney Woods is not that kind of haven." Instead, the school asserts, Piney Woods is a place "where academics are stressed and self-pity is not an option." Pow.



Students at Piney Woods who fail to maintain a C average cannot participate in extracurricular activities. A list of basic rules for behavior sits at the front of each classroom. The emphasis on discipline works: Nearly 90 percent of Piney Woods students earn their diplomas, about the same percentage as at New England prep schools. "I don't have a problem with the rules. I come from a disciplined home," says Kelsey Minor, the president of Piney Woods' student government. "For those who don't have discipline at home it helps them behave."

The military seems a natural fit for this structured environment: Junior ROTC came to the campus when Major General Wallace Arnold, now a trustee, saw a segment about Piney Woods on CBS News' "60 Minutes." He landed his helicopter on an open field and convinced administrators to begin what now stands as one of America's most successful JROTC programs. "The kids are here 24-7; so we can drill them and train them at night," says Major (Ret.) Nicholas E. Kreel, the commander of the school's JROTC unit. "It reminds me of my own tour in Korea, where everyone was on base all the time and everyone really got to know one another."

Kreel, who is married to the niece of slain civil rights leader Medgar Evers, came to the school two years ago, soon after retiring from the military and finding he was afflicted with terminal prostate cancer. "I'm trying to buy my way into heaven," he jokes. "I'm doing my part to turn these kids into good citizens. We teach study skills, first aid, hunter education, speaking skills, shooting skills, and pride in a country called America."

Administrators say the school has one of the highest JROTC participation rates outside of a military academy—about half of all students take part in the program, and many cite it as their favorite subject. Under the banner of the Tornado Battalion, Piney Woods students often dominate state and regional JROTC competitions. A handful of Piney Woods students have won places at Annapolis and West Point, and many more participate in ROTC units on civilian college campuses.

Piney Woods faces a few obstacles in the future. A significant portion of its donor base started giving after seeing Jones' "This Is Your Life" appearance—meaning they are now between 60 and 80. Meanwhile, the physical plant could use some work. Finding teachers is also a challenge. Salaries—which average $26,000 a year—sit about $10,000 below Mississippi's average for public

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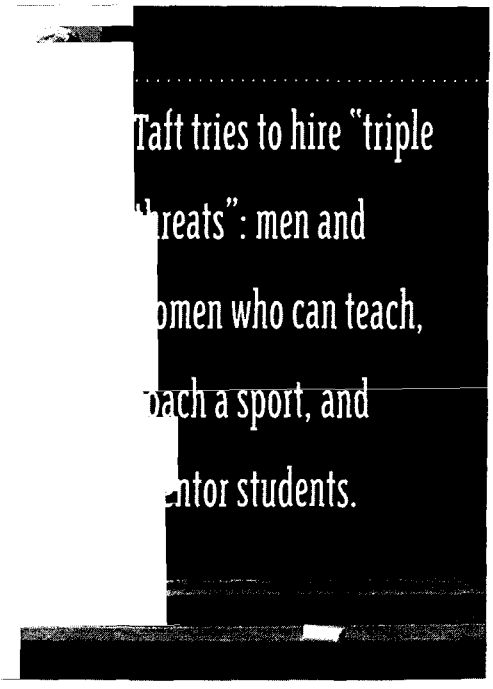

school teachers.

Finally, the school's all-black nature raises questions. While Piney Woods has never discriminated against whites (one current student is white, as are a number of teachers and administrators), the school's nearly all-black student body is an anomaly in an increasingly multiracial society. Beady resolutely defends the pattern. "If there's one thing that we're sure our students graduate with, it's a sense that they are grounded in who they are," he says. "As a result, they are not intimidated in overwhelmingly white situations. That's how we make them into leaders."

—Eli Lehrer

City on a Hill Charter School

Boston, Massachusetts

On a humid day in the middle of June, a young black man walked into a second-floor classroom at the City on a Hill School in Boston. After politely introducing himself to the strangers seated in the room, he began to recite a passage from *The Tempest.* Patiently and deliberately he worked his way through the difficult language. The strangers nodded approvingly, but he knew his job was only half-done. He was also to be tested on his understanding of the play as a whole. After defining a few words, explaining the plot, and introducing the characters, he was asked by one of his examiners, "Do you think Caliban is right?" Without missing a beat, the boy answered "No." Turning to the others in the room, he asked, "How could anyone question the gift of language?" With that he was asked to leave the room and the three strangers filled out his report card. He was ready, they concluded, for sophomore English.

Each spring, every student at City on a Hill must, in addition to passing his classes, face a series of competency exams similar to the one described here. The final judgment on each student's performance is always made by a "jury" drawn from a group of volunteers from the local community—doctors, lawyers, college students, religious leaders, media personalities, and politicians. The juries are asked to consider both the student's knowledge of the subject matter and his presentation. In a reading exam such as the one described here, a student must read in accordance with the sense of the passage, paying attention to the different voices speaking and to the punctuation of each sentence. Even in math and science exams, it isn't enough for the student to come up with the right answer. He must also show the jury exactly why he chose a particular strategy for solving the problem and then answer questions about it.

These public examinations represent the culmination of a long year of work for both students and teachers, but as one teacher explains, they exemplify the school's mission of "developing our students as citizens." While many school systems have programs once or twice a year where the public is invited to observe their local schools, City on a Hill has hundreds of visitors a year.

This high school, which opened its doors as a charter school located in the downtown Boston YMCA in 1995, was founded by Sarah Kass, daughter of American Enterprise Institute ethicist Leon Kass. Its halls are far from quiet, but certain differences immediately separate City on a Hill from other city schools. Not a single four-letter word can be heard. No threats are muttered, no lockers slammed. Teachers and students engage in friendly conversations that have nothing to do with discipline. And suddenly, within seconds of the bell ringing, the halls are empty. A teacher begins to address the one or two stragglers. "Mr.—," but before she can finish, they scurry off to class in hurried embarrassment.

Teachers attribute this polite behavior to the school's focus on creating a respectful atmosphere. Students are constantly reminded to introduce themselves and speak respectfully to strangers, and they do. Waiting in the hall, I hear two girls complaining about their class schedule. Suddenly noticing me, the younger one blurts out, "Are you going to tell Mr. Hays what we said?" Her older classmate scolds her: "You don't even know who she is. You can't ask her that." As if to solve that problem, they both stretch out their hands and introduce themselves.

This discipline and civility travel with these kids during their internships all over Boston: at the New England Aquarium, the Gardner Museum, the local NAACP, and elsewhere. Students work for one afternoon every two weeks, and then for two weeks solid during the month of February. Many students form relationships with these organizations that last into the summer, and seniors, who are required to do a yearlong project researching a civic question of their choosing, often work with them as well.

Every week the school stages assemblies—known as "town meetings"—to teach the students about participatory democracy and community responsibility, and also to inculcate good speaking skills. City on a Hill principal Paul Hays, who runs these meetings, often stops students mid-sentence. "Speak up. Be loud. Stand up straight. Shoulders back." After a while, Hays says, "it becomes ingrained." Given Hays's commanding presence—he is a former college basketball player—the students take his comments to heart. As teacher Lisa Graustein points out, "These are an important set of life skills. How do you make your voice heard? What is the system and how do you work within it? What is your responsibility as a citizen? We teach them they still have a responsibility to their community and their country."

Its teachers say City on a Hill encourages classroom innova-

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tion more than other schools where they have taught. The school calls itself "teacher-driven," because there is no real administration separate from the faculty. Teachers share all duties from college counseling to discipline to curricular development. The principal was a teacher here until two years ago, and he still finds time to instruct.

City on a Hill teachers seem to compel each other to work harder. Science teacher Mike Schaff, a 1996 Notre Dame graduate, says "I didn't realize until the first day of orientation how talented this faculty is. I was just blown away." City on a Hill is sufficiently confident about the quality of its teaching to launch a new urban teacher institute in conjunction with nearby Northeastern University. College students interested in schooling as a career will come to COAH to experience a real inner-city school, and the COAH faculty will offer them seminars.

The teacher institute also helps advance COAH's broader mission as a charter school pioneer. Despite the school's many successes—which include sending every member of its first graduating class on to college—the teachers believe they have a wider duty. "If we do a great job with the 200 students here, that's not good enough," says math teacher Grace Kalamanik. "The whole reason for us being here is to figure out things that make education work and then get those embedded in the public school system." Paul Hays elaborates, "We all got into this because we love young people. But why will we stay? Because we hope through the charter school movement to change the fundamental structure of our nation's educational system."

A successful school requires not just a dedicated faculty but also extensive parental involvement. Yet there are significant obstacles to eliciting such involvement from COAH parents. Many at the school are being raised by single parents. Some don't speak English. And "many parents had very negative schooling experiences themselves and have mixed emotions about us," according to Graustein. School policy dictates that if a parent comes in to talk about his child, all the child's teachers must be there, along with his advisor and the principal. If a teacher cannot attend, he submits a written statement about the student's progress and explains it to another teacher who will be present.

City on a Hill also relies on a longer than normal school day—running from 8:00 to 3:25. Students are required to stay until 4:00 if they haven't passed in the day's homework—to work on the assignment. Many students voluntarily stay well into the evening, getting extra help from teachers. "Kids will stay here until the last adult has left the building," Kalamanik reports, and many nights that doesn't happen until eight or nine p.m.

Schaff mentions one of his students, a junior, "who came to me after looking long and hard at the board that listed seniors' college choices. He looked at me and said, 'Mr. Schaff, I'm gonna be up there.'" To be on track to graduate the following year, he had to do a lot of extra work, including attending City on a Hill's summer program. Schaff happily reports that this student, "who was basically getting Ds and Fs his first year, is now getting Cs and Bs."

City on a Hill has its work cut out for it. Massachusetts recently instituted standardized tests that assess student performance in a variety of academic disciplines. Only 64 percent of COAH tenth graders passed the latest English exam, 31 percent passed the math exam, and 42 percent passed the science-technology exam. While significantly better than public schools enrolling similar populations (over 80 percent of COAH's students are minorities), those results "are not anywhere near where we want them to be," Kalamanik remarks.

But while some around the state protested the Board of Education's decision to institute these tests, City on a Hill students and teachers think the testing regimen will help them improve. "We've got to show them what we can do," said one student. This year's scores improved considerably from last year's. Rewarding those results, the Massachusetts Board of Education recently renewed the school's charter for another five years.

City on a Hill acknowledges difficulties in challenging its smartest students. Graustein worries, "Our brighter students tend to plateau on their test scores." There is no tracking at City on a Hill; so the results for students at each end of the spectrum are mixed. Bright students often spend much of their time helping their peers understand the work.

Meanwhile, less determined students leave the school altogether. Due to the firm demands it places on its students, it has a substantial transfer rate. It seems many students cannot or will not meet COAH's high expectations.

For all the individualized attention COAH offers, it cannot succeed with every student. But for many underprivileged students needing opportunity and motivation, City on a Hill produces excellent results. These include a 95 percent daily attendance rate, 100 percent college acceptance for those who applied, and new social skills that give many graduates a chance to be "model citizens."

—Naomi Schaefer

The Taft School

Watertown, Connecticut

Lance Odden calls himself a nineteenth-century liberal, has big problems with the 1960s, and gladly tangles with tuition-paying parents who want him as headmaster to compromise standards at the Taft School.

"In the 1960s, there was a cultural revolution. There were all these pressures put on universities, and for the most part the trustees and faculty gave in," states Odden. Then "they found they couldn't go back." But at Odden's private high school, "there's a far greater similarity between our standards today and those that existed before the cultural revolution than there is on the university level." He notes that "the biggest tension arises when a parent who comes out of that period says 'I'm thrilled with your high standards'—and then wants some excuse granted when a son or daughter misbehaves."

Odden came to Taft in 1961 as a bookstore clerk and hockey coach, quickly moved into positions as a history teacher, history department chair, and assistant headmaster, then took over as headmaster in 1972. Odden, who plans to retire in 2001, is the

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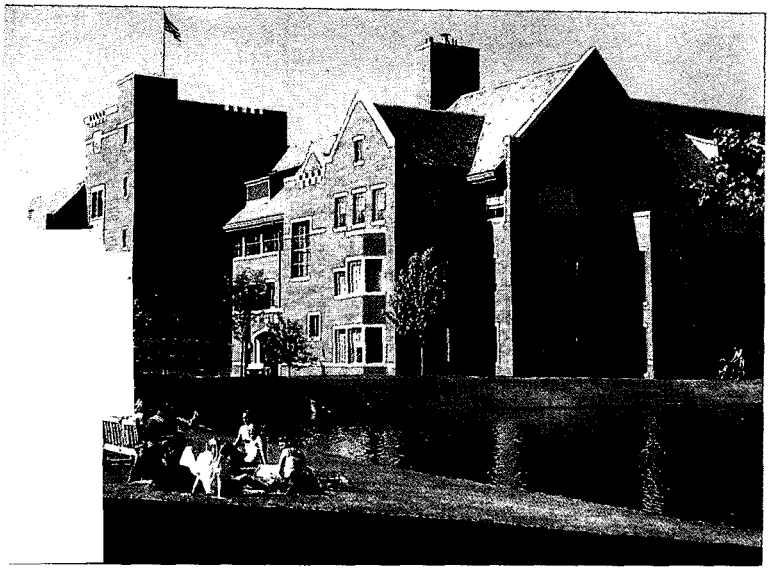

Relaxing on the grounds of the Taft School.

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longest serving headmaster of a large New England prep school.

Taft is a 550-student college-prep boarding school located in Watertown, Connecticut. Horace Dutton Taft—William Howard Taft's brother and Robert A. Taft's uncle—founded the school in 1890. In terms of finances, size, and college placement it now sits squarely in the middle of New England's 20 or so old-line prep schools. Like most of its nearby brethren, Taft combines a healthy respect for tradition with modern facilities and techniques, and ends up sending many of its students to the nation's best colleges.

At first glance, Taft's plush facilities, immense wealth, and high costs make it seem an elitist place. It sports an elaborate theater, special rooms for every kind of art project imaginable, squash courts, a giant field house, a library with a grand light-filled reading room, and even a telescope for astronomy. Students enjoy near-24-hour access to teachers, and classes almost never top 15 students. Offerings include subjects like Chinese and Japanese. A large endowment (well over $100 million) and high tuition ($25,000 per year including room and board; $18,200 for day students) pay for all this.

But Taft opens its doors as wide as it can. "The founders were plain-cloth Republicans. They never wanted to keep people out," says Odden. "If I had one goal for the future, it would be to be so well funded that economics is never a consideration in admissions policy." Taft won't disclose exact admissions statistics but peer schools typically accept between a quarter and a half of those who apply. Most students come from the Northeast but Taft draws from 33 states and 21 foreign countries. About a third of the student body receives financial aid. Like most of its prep-school brethren, Taft went co-ed in the early 1970s and began actively recruiting African Americans a few years earlier. Indeed, the all-male prep school culture of Hollywood movies no longer exists: Pottstown, Pennsylvania's Hill School, the last of the East Coast's major boys' schools, admitted female students in 1998.

Despite certain physical extravagances, Taft is a very thrifty place. It doesn't waste money on bureaucracy, for instance: there is none. Except for a few admissions and fund-raising professionals who travel all the time, just about every college-educated employee at Taft (even Odden) teaches and advises students. "The very nature of an independent school is that we believe that teachers working together as colleagues, not school boards or bureaucracy, do the best job of guiding young people," says Bill Morris, Taft's dean of academic affairs. "There's a freedom from outside interference that we as a faculty guard jealously."

Like other New England prep schools, Taft tries to hire "triple threats": men and women who can teach in the classroom, coach a sport (nearly all Taft students play sports each day after classes), and mentor students on personal and academic issues. This job keeps most teachers on call from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. all week, and then on Saturday mornings too. (Prep school vacations, however, are longer than those in public schools.) Most of the teachers Taft hires could make more money with fewer demands by grading papers and teaching classes in a wealthy suburb. "Parents and students now expect us to hire teachers with at least a master's degree in the subject they teach, a lot of experience counseling, and some success as a college-level athlete or even coach," says Morris. "We also want to make sure that, above all else, we hire teachers who really want to work with young people."

Taft recruits a bright student body, but not everyone is brilliant. The bottom of the class scores around the national average on the SATs. Over 80 percent of students take at least one advanced placement exam by the time they graduate. Although a healthy contingent of Taft students makes its way to the Ivy League each year, Middlebury, Georgetown, and Boston College ended up with the most Taft graduates in 1999.

"There are two groups of people here," says Heather Lindeman, the editor of Taft's student newspaper. "One group is pretty bright but doesn't want to admit it. Then there's a group that's really interested in intellectual topics; they'll debate any topic any time anywhere. A conversation in the dining hall can get so intense you'll almost miss class."

Taft emphasizes core academic subjects. All students must take four years of English, three of math (although nearly everyone takes more), three years of foreign language (again, most everyone takes four), at least two serious lab sciences, a year of American history, and another year of history. There's an extensive arts program—nearly all students play an instrument, sing, or work in the visual arts—lots of philosophy and religion courses, and a bevy of electives in history and English. Required courses give students a rigorous diet of reading and writing. "If there's only one thing that most students come out of Taft with it's the ability to sit down, organize, and write a fairly interesting, lengthy essay," says teacher Steven Palmer.

Teachers try to challenge students intellectually. A discussion of *Hamlet* I observed was better than some that take place in Ivy League classrooms—the level of discussion was equally high, but obtuse critical posturing was absent. An American History class on the nation's westward expansion began with trendy student bashing of frontier settlers as white interlopers but then veered into something much more balanced and sophisticated when the teacher began challenging student orthodoxies. The faculty demand rigorous thinking, and seem to have little patience for fluff or cant.

"If you look at English, you'll see a strong focus on Western

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literature. You'll see the same in history, philosophy, or really any department," says Morris. "We want to introduce other perspectives, and I think we do a pretty good job of it, particularly at the senior level, but we want to teach the Western tradition first." Latin, Greek, and classical history continue to be taught, though somewhat peripherally.

At the same time, there are classes in "women's studies," even "Race, Class, and Gender in American Society." Alan Paton's anti-apartheid novel *Cry, the Beloved Country* is required reading. Taft also encourages independent study and will let a student take a light course load for a semester to work on a special project. Taft also has some weak courses—an astronomy course I observed didn't use any physics or math.

Taft rigorously enforces an honor code prohibiting cheating, lying, and stealing. Students take it seriously and write an abbreviated version of it on every paper and test they hand in. "If I thought someone had violated the honor code, first, I'd try to get him to turn himself in. But eventually I'd turn him in myself. I think most other students would do the same," says Price Bell, Taft's student-elected Head Monitor. "The honor code, when fully developed, allows you to have a much better and closer relationship with your teachers as peers." Bell says it's "a blight" on the school that students have occasionally gotten away with honor code violations.

A willingness to accept religious faith, school administrators say, plays a role in Taft's moral culture. Students regularly attend required non-sectarian chapel. There are student-run Christian and Jewish organizations. The school provides a chaplain, as well as several elective courses on the Bible. "I don't think our Founding Fathers wanted us to impose religion, but I don't think they wanted to deny people the opportunity to be religious in public," says Odden. "We just want our students to know that it's O.K. to believe in something bigger than you and, at the very least, to understand the role that religion plays in people's lives."

Still, many things that trouble religious conservatives also exist at the school. Taft has a number of openly gay students and teachers, for instance. A required "Self and Community" course attempts to give students an ethical framework for thinking about contraception, sex, AIDS, and other controversial topics.

Taft also has some real problems. Student stress over academics probably tops the list. "There are lots of people who will take an A.P. course just because it's labeled A.P. and not because it's something they really want to learn," says Lindeman. Demand for counseling services is high, and eating disorders exist among the female population. Morris and Odden both worry about high academic standards and success in recruiting top students turning Taft into a "pressure cooker." There is some student drinking and drug use, but chewing tobacco has recently been the most prominent substance abuse problem.

The difficulty of finding "triple threats" for the faculty in today's booming job market represents a cloud on the school's horizon. "We'll just have to work very hard to find the right people," says Morris.

Odden believes that these challenges can be met and that Taft School can provide students with an even more rigorous education in the future. "We want to produce people who can make a difference in society," he says. "That's our school motto: 'Not to be served, but to serve.'"

—Eli Lehrer

Frederick Douglass Academy

Harlem, New York

It sounds like a fatal mistake for any educator. But Gregory Hodge lost no sleep over his "controversial" decision—or the ruckus that ensued.

When Hodge became principal of the acclaimed Frederick Douglass Academy in Harlem in 1996, he eliminated the school's African studies class. Some parents went ballistic, even threatening to bring the "brothers" from a nearby mosque down to the school to set him straight. Hodge told the parents: Go ahead, make my day, but be sure the brothers know they'll have a bus full of cops outside to greet them. The brothers never showed, Hodge recalls.

A stocky man whose gravely voice and cantankerous manner makes him a dead-ringer for Congressman Charles Rangel, Hodge probably understood his decision would be political dynamite at the overwhelmingly black school. But he apparently didn't much care. He was responsible for 1,150 students from grades 6-12, and simply concluded there was no room for the course amid a tight curriculum that now includes Latin, Calculus, A.P. Physics, A.P. English, and PSAT preparation. "If this were a white school we wouldn't be unusual. It's just that people think in Central Harlem this can't happen," says assistant principal Dorothy Haine. "We have important work to do. We're not interested in what other people think."

Society may have low expectations for these students, but the Frederick Douglass Academy expects and demands a lot. School administrators and teachers are consumed by the desire to ensure that all students, "my kiddies" Hodge calls them, are admitted to college. It starts early with visits by sixth- and seventh-graders to prospective schools. "You tell them, 'You are going to college, you are going to college, you are going to college,'" Hodge says.

Hodge is determined that insidious influences from the street not seep into the school. Across the street are boarded up buildings and a drug store with a huge "Medicaid Accepted" banner out front. It's not all urban blight, though: A new video store has opened on the block. Hodge, who grew up poor in a family that moved like "gypsies" from one apartment to another in order to avoid rent collectors, tells his students "no matter what chaos is around, you don't have to succumb."

The schools rigid academic program and equally stringent rules of behavior are evident the moment a student enters the door—and even before. All students and their guardians must sign a pledge that they will subscribe to 12 non-negotiable rules. These include "nightly homework," "respect the building," and "be prepared to do work every day." Punishments for deviations are detailed in order of severity, from "(1) Conference with teacher," to "(4) In-school Suspension," and ultimately, "(6) Transfer to another school."

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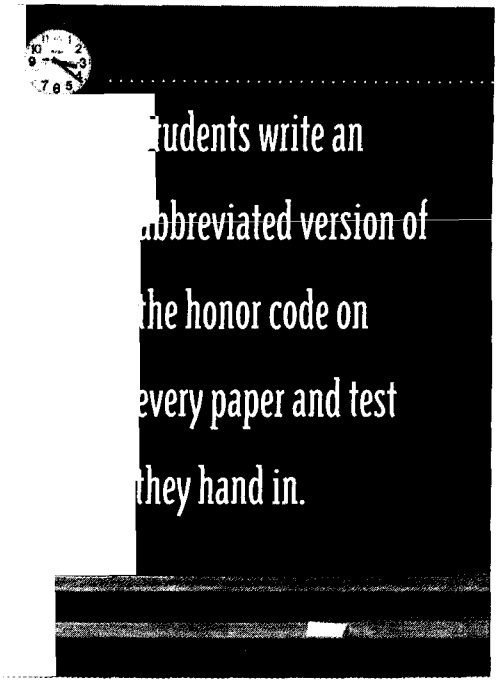

(Hodge says expulsion is rare.)

The student body, or "community of scholars" as they're officially known, also adheres to a more general ethos adapted from the official creed of Morehouse College, a historically black school. This again bespeaks an earlier, more civil era, including the pledge "I will respect the rights and property of others" and practice "personal and academic integrity."

The original Frederick Douglass High School, now defunct, boasts a long list of distinguished alumni—including author Claude Brown and educator Kenneth Clark. In 1968 the school was transformed into an intermediate middle school for seventh- and eighth-graders at its current location. It quickly deteriorated. By the late '80s, it was a genuine blackboard jungle, where students routinely set fires, slashed teacher's cars, and otherwise abused their instructors, recalls Howard Lew, now an assistant principal. The city closed the school in 1991.

Loraine Monroe was allowed to re-open the school for seventh graders the next fall, and in 1993 to turn it back into a high school. She implemented an old-style curriculum and required uniforms. Neighborhood residents actually thought a private school had opened in the building. Test scores soon improved dramatically—and outshone most other public schools in New York City.

Today the school feels, inside and out, like something straight from the 1950s. In his physics class, a young teacher dressed as if he just stepped out of Brooks Brothers calls on students with a crisp "Yes, ma'am." Teachers address each other by their surnames even when they are out of earshot of students.

This is not the kind of school where students learn to make their own "value judgments," to borrow P.C. parlance. "Are you going to apologize?" assistant principal Haine asks one girl, whose temper and skirt both were a bit too short for comfort. Silence. "Yes, you are. And I'm going to look for you tomorrow in appropriate attire."

The alcove inside the entrance to the Frederick Douglass Academy contains nine mirrors—so that students can make sure they are properly dressed for success. To avoid distractions and foster pride among students, the school adheres to a strict dress code. When Hodge is on the prowl for dress code violations, even a loosened tie will elict a stern rebuke.

The academic regimen is also stringent, thanks in no small measure to dedicated teachers. Many previously worked at public schools with cynical colleagues who considered themselves little more than baby-sitters or parole officers. Here expectations are much higher. "There are no second chances in college" and therefore there is "no make-up work" here unless "you get hit by a car," says history teacher Petal Haynes. Every day she gives students a brief quiz based on the assigned reading.

The curriculum is spelled out in detail. "There are no electives. You can't take no basket weaving or African studies," Hodge sputters. PSAT preparation begins in the seventh grade, along with an introduction to classic literature and a visit to one college. In eighth grade, students must visit two colleges and hone their study skills. In tenth grade, students write college essays and begin SAT preparation. In their senior year, students can take A.P. classes in math, science, English, and foreign languages. They prepare a résumé and, of course, take more college trips, as the long struggle reaches its apex.

Students are required to apply to the City University of New York, the State University of New York, and six private schools. Students from the class of 2000 were accepted to Dartmouth, Harvard, and other prestigious schools across the country. Last year, all but one of the school's 113 seniors went to college; the black sheep, so to speak, enlisted in the Navy.

All of this is accomplished with relatively modest resources—per-pupil funding is approximately $8,000, about the same as at other high schools, good and bad, throughout New York City.

The athletic program includes some 33 sports—everything from basketball to fencing. English teacher Patrick Mangan doubles as the athletic director. The sports program and some key school activities are subsidized by corporate benefactors, which include the Gap, PricewaterhouseCoopers, and Con Edison. The school store, the Little Shop of Scholars, sells books (mostly classics) and clothing mostly donated by the Gap. Proceeds are used to help students pay their college application fees, and some students work at the store to prepare for real jobs. It was staffed when we visited by twelfth-grader David, who hopes to attend Union College, and told us, "I want to make a lot of money."

To broaden their outlook, Frederick Douglass students travel all over the world. On a recent trip to Japan, passengers on the airplane couldn't believe a bunch of teenagers could be so well-behaved. In a crowded and noisy but not unruly lunchroom—where some 80 percent of the students qualify for federally subsidized lunches for the poor—I asked students about their school. One senior summarized it this way: "We go against the norm."

—Evan Gahr

Hanna Sacks School

Chicago, Illinois

Academic excellence sometimes comes in unusual packages. Consider the case of the Chicago school know as Hanna Sacks Bais Yaackov. Housed in a boxy 1950s elementary school building near the end of the Devon Avenue corridor on Chicago's far north side, Hanna Sacks lacks a gymnasium, sports teams, food service, a real auditorium (two classrooms suffice), music classes, and broad-band Internet access. Most of the faculty work part time, for minuscule salaries. Yet when it comes to raising its students' performance, Hanna Sacks

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outperforms every private school in Chicago.

In a city where public schools spend $8,000 per pupil, and private academies up to twice as much, Hanna Sacks tuition stands at $7,800 per year. Over 60 percent of students receive financial aid. A third of all students qualify for free or reduced price lunches and many more have family incomes that put them close. Families who want their daughters to attend (Sacks is all female) rarely get turned away. When they do, it's normally because of doubts about the family's religious faith rather than finances or academic background (Sacks is an Orthodox Jewish school).

Hanna Sacks gets results because it asks more of its students than just about any other high school in the country. Students complete a full college preparatory curriculum that includes four years each of science, history, and English, three years of math, and two of computers. And on top of this students complete a rich religious curriculum built around reading Jewish sacred teachings in their original languages, plus Jewish history, and required community service. Students graduate able to solve chemical equations, quote Shakespeare, read Aramaic, and debate Talmud.

To accomplish all this, the Hanna Sacks school day runs from 8:15 to 5:00, with two breaks. Occasional all-school weekend retreats and a yearly musical production give some students the impression that they live at school. Intense friendships form: Even the most ready-to-leave seniors wax rhapsodic about their fellow students.

Hanna Sacks does this in an environment that's pervasively religious and rule-bound. School regulations forbid talking with boys and wearing revealing clothing outside of school. Students can't participate in co-ed youth groups, attend co-ed summer camps, or even do community service with boys. "What's the difference between having a friend and having a date? It's not clear. The boundaries between talking to the boy or not talking to the boy are much more clear," says principal Shoshonna Bechhofer. "When a girl is involved with a boy she has less time for studying, she has less energy for spiritual growth."

As Orthodox Jews, Hanna Sacks students endeavor to follow every aspect of Jewish law to the letter. Students are expected to behave themselves in thousands of minor ways: The handbook doesn't even bother to make explicit rules against drinking, drugs, and theft.

This is partly out of necessity—the school's entire non-teaching staff consists of three secretaries, one of whom works part time. Students take an active role in running the school. "They really listen to what we say," says Rena Pinkus, a member of the school's student government. "When we ask them to move exam times so that two really hard classes don't end up on top of each other, they do." Student lockers have no locks on them. (Teachers nodded and smiled as a student opened a friend's locker and filled it with streamers and candy to celebrate a birthday.) The school's 18 out-of-town students live on their own in local boarding houses, drive their own cars, and work part-time jobs. Traditional prep schools like Andover and Choate Rosemary Hall would never dream of giving their students this much freedom.

While graduating seniors chafe under the school's strict

A classroom at the Hanna Sacks School.

policies, few question their underlying wisdom. "There are girls who date and watch TV. The rules spell out what we're aspiring to, working towards a whole being," says Faith Tanenbaum, a senior boarding student from Savannah, Georgia. "It's saying, 'spend more time doing community service instead of watching TV.' That's what they try to promote."

As a *Bais Yaackov* (literally, House of Jacob) Hanna Sacks is part of an educational movement that has traditionally provided outstanding education in Jewish practice, but often skimped on secular learning. The mental discipline required to study Talmud and Torah served students well in many career fields, but recipients of Orthodox Jewish educations often needed to play catch-up when they began taking college classes. By the mid-1990s, many Hanna Sacks parents and trustees weren't happy with this state of affairs. Bechhofer, who began at the school as a religious studies teacher, became principal with a mission of upgrading the school's secular curriculum.

"The changes were what most parents wanted. Some parents were concerned that we were creating too much stress on the students, and were concerned we would secularize their experience. We had to be mindful of not over-burdening the students," she says. "We wanted to keep the balance so that we would not lose the spiritual and religious parts of the curriculum." Changing the school, says board chairman Rabbi Yoseph Liberman, was a group process. "It wasn't any one person," he says. "It was the whole community working together."

When Bechhofer took over, the curriculum included only two science courses, no art classes, no modern foreign language other than Hebrew, and few opportunities for college-level work. Today, Hanna Sacks offers advanced placement courses in most of its subjects and has begun building up its science program. The religious program has also become more intense: Administrators stepped up the Jewish history requirement, and Jewish scripture classes shifted from memorization to textual analysis.

The religious curriculum, a legitimate high school education

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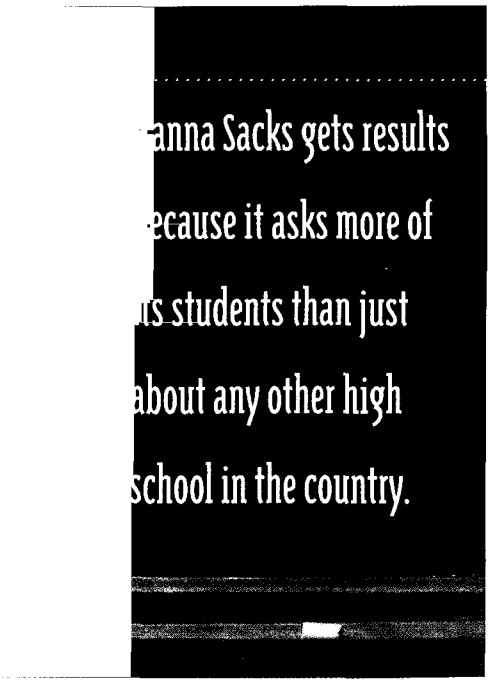

by itself, goes into a depth that few high school classes ever approach. One class, for example, spends almost an entire school year closely reading the prophet Jeremiah in the original languages. "You know, there were over 1 million prophets," says Shira Irons, who teaches courses about prophets. "But the ones who were passed down to us are the ones that really matter in today's people's lives. We can learn more about them every time we look at them."

To expand its offerings, Hanna Sacks has turned to part-time teachers. For most schools, these low-paid instructors might have spelled educational disaster, but at Hanna Sacks there were unanticipated benefits: highly educated Orthodox Jewish professionals and at-home mothers from synagogues around the region answered the school's call and took their places in front of classrooms. "You see our teachers not just as teachers but as people you know and admire," explains junior Brvria Liberman. "The teachers are able to talk to you not just as teachers but as people who can really be role models."

The school's curriculum upgrade remains a work in progress. Physics classes, for example, lack a math component (that's coming in two years), computer classes don't teach programing, and history classes focus on textbooks rather than original documents. Top suburban public schools, good magnet schools, and most private schools provide a more rigorous secular curriculum. But they typically have the luxury of turning away students and asking students to master many fewer areas. (Hanna Sacks gets around some of these problems by channeling students with different abilities through a complex tracking system.)

Except perhaps in biology classes, where evolution gets separated from the rest of the curriculum, the secular curriculum wouldn't seem out of place anywhere in America. "There are so many choices that it really isn't a problem," says Bechhofer. "For example, we don't teach *Romeo and Juliet* in freshman English because it introduces issues of romance and questions about authority that we might not want to raise. But we teach *Julius Caesar* instead."

In any case, students do well. Nearly all students spend a year at an Israeli seminary right after graduating. A few get married and settle down to raise families. Many attend Yeshiva University's Stern College (really the only choice for pervasively Jewish all-female education in general subjects), while others attend schools that run the gamut from the Ivy League to local community colleges.

It's easy to chalk up the successes of the Hanna Sacks school to cultural values: Few if any other schools have as many children from homes without televisions, and few can draw all of their students from cultures that prize learning as highly. It's unlikely that students could receive so much implicit trust from the administration without the school's pervasively religious environment. And its unlikely, to say the least, that many American schools will mandate Bible study anytime soon. Still, the Hanna Sacks school takes a wide range of students whose only commonality is a willingness to play by the rules, and it turns out truly outstanding scholars—all with fewer resources than the typical public high school. All sorts of schools could learn from this lesson.

—Eli Lehrer

City Springs Elementary School

Baltimore, Maryland

It's 1:30 on a Friday afternoon, and I'm standing on the stairs in front of the main hallway of City Springs Elementary in Baltimore, trying to get a good photograph of the school's lime-green walls. As I walk up and down looking for the best angle for my photo, I realize something's missing: It's amazingly quiet.

Fumbling with my camera, I run across teacher Anayezuka Ahidiana, who's heading to her class. "The only sound you hear," she says, "is of children *learning*."

You might have heard many sounds five years ago—crying, bawling, the curt commands of discipline. But the City Springs of 1996 was a violent, lawless place where very little education took place. *None* of the school's third graders passed the statewide reading test. Only five fifth graders were reading at grade level—and by the standards City Springs uses today, even those five would be a year behind. The school was on the verge of being taken over by the state board of education. "When I first saw City Springs," Ahidiana says, "it was wild. You had lots of people wandering in off the street."

Today City Springs is being transformed, and three elements are involved: a tough-minded principal, a generous local foundation, and a controversial but successful method of education called Direct Instruction.

In many states, City Springs would be a charter school. But Maryland's powerful teachers' unions have ensured that the state's heavily Democratic legislature has never passed a bill legalizing charters. So City Springs is a "new school," and explaining that requires a bit of history.

A rising number of Baltimoreans know the city's inflexible bureaucracy has doomed Baltimore's poorest students to mediocrity and failure. Leading the effort to bring some fresh variety to local schools is the Abell Foundation, whose wealth comes from the family that started the *Baltimore Sun*. Abell grants helped bring the Calvert curriculum to some Baltimore public

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City Springs Elementary School in Baltimore.

schools beginning in 1990 (see page 22). This experiment was so successful that in 1996 the Baltimore school board offered to make Calvert materials the core of the Baltimore elementary school curriculum. Calvert declined because such an effort would tax its limited resources.

After this disappointment, Abell Foundation president Robert Embry reported, they decided to look for other curricula as rigorous as Calvert's. The foundation's staff investigated and found Direct Instruction was one of the few elementary school curricula with a proven record.

"We went to the city and said, 'We'll fund six schools for five years, one wealthy, one poor, the rest in-between,'" said Embry. "We're simply saying, 'Here is something that does work.'" The Abell Foundation provided a five-year grant at $1.2 million per year to support the Direct Instruction project, beginning in the 1996-97 school year. The foundation created the Baltimore Curriculum Project to oversee the program and ensure its funds did not leach into the city school bureaucracy.

Since then, the number of schools involved has grown to 18. Seventeen of these are regular public schools with an Abell-funded Direct Instruction consultant. The eighteenth school is City Springs.

City Springs is a "new school." The idea, Abell president Embry said, came from the work of University of Washington public policy professor Paul T. Hill, who argues that the best way for public schools to improve is if their operations are contracted out to nonprofit operators.

In theory, the Baltimore Curriculum Project runs City Springs. But because the school is not a charter, in practice it's a lot more complicated. The project has no power to hire or fire, for example, although the Project's Muriel Berkeley says that if principal Bernice Whelchel is removed, "we'd have a pretty substantial say" in who would replace her.

Baltimore Curriculum Project executive director Chris Doherty explains that City Springs has more freedom to set its own curriculum, as long as it doesn't do anything that would upset school bureaucrats. When dealing with those in authority, Doherty says, "we don't ask for things, we ask for *exemptions* from things." He's been able to obtain some flexibility; his greatest triumph was ensuring that City Springs and the other Direct Instruction schools reported to their own assistant superintendent.

Given the freedom to set curriculum, City Springs now teaches according to the methods of Direct Instruction, a mode of teaching created by University of Oregon education professor Siegfried Englemann and his associates in the 1960s. Direct Instruction has been described as "a way of life." That's overdoing it, but it's fair to say Direct Instruction is an especially firm, ordered, and precise way of teaching.

All students in City Springs study the same subjects at the same time. Everyone does reading at 8:55, language at 10:30, lunch at 11:45, writing at 12:30, math at 12:45, more reading at 1:55, more writing at 2:55, then dismissal at 3:15. There aren't any bells to signify when subjects change; the students and teachers know when it's time to shift gears.

Direct Instruction uses a uniform series of workbooks. Most controversially, these workbooks have scripts (what educators call "rubrics") which teachers read from. The method for each lesson is the same: The teacher reads a sentence or two, shouts, "Get ready!", snaps her fingers, and the students then shout out the response.

Here's a Direct Instruction lesson from a fifth-grade math class. The students are doing lesson 20 from Siegfried Englemann and Douglas Carmine's *Understanding Math Concepts*. "The dog has 99 fleas and wants to get rid of 70 fleas," the teacher says. "How many fleas did the dog have?"

"NINETY-NINE FLEAS!" the students shout.

"Would you add or subtract?"

'SUBTRACT."

They then take out their lined workbooks and write the problem down, separating the parts of the problem with thick lines:

"NINE MINUS ZERO IS NINE! NINE MINUS SEVEN IS TWO!"

"Read the whole problem!"

'NINETY-NINE MINUS SEVENTY EQUALS 29!"

The students then move on to lesson 21.

The students chant their answers, in a tone somewhere between a recitation in church and soldiers counting cadence. They do this 100 times a day, five days a week.

Student behavior is also tightly regulated. When a student is sitting at a desk, he isn't just sitting; he's in the "listening-learning position" or LLP—feet firmly on the floor, back square in the seat, arms crossed on the desk. Students don't run down the halls to the bathroom or to the cafeteria; they line up and march, walking with their arms crossed to prevent "inappropriate touching." Even the old "dunce's corner" has been reformed; students who misbehave are still sent to a corner, but it's now called the "time-out corner," and the bad student's desk faces the teacher, so he can keep learning even when being disciplined.

The teacher also gives plenty of positive encouragement. When a class does a lesson particularly well, the teacher says, "You're super smart!" Another form of praise is the "silent cheer"—the class all waving their arms up in the air at the same time. But this praise isn't the cheap currency of self-esteem; it's only given when a student does well at his lessons.

Direct Instruction students are constantly tested, as many as two

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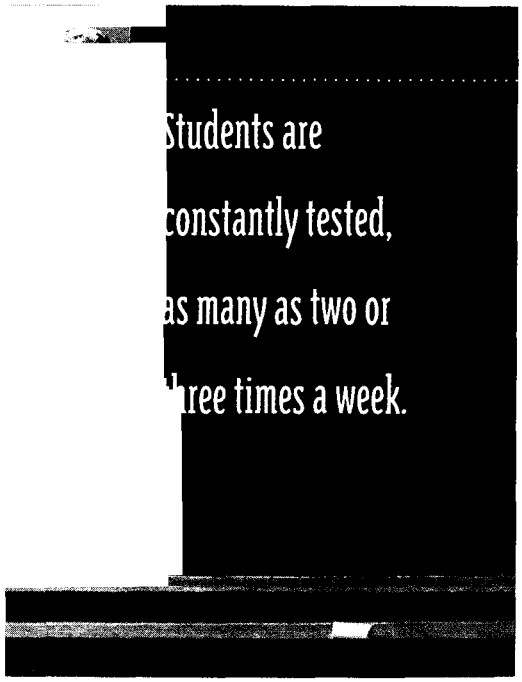

or three times a week. This enables good students to move forward more rapidly, but also enables the school to determine who the poor students are who need more work. No one at City Springs is socially promoted; from the earliest grades, the worst students are drilled again and again until they get it right.

Before coming to Baltimore, Chris Doherty taught Direct Instruction in Chicago and tested students there. He explains that testing is very important because it can't be assumed that students from the inner city have the same vocabularies as their wealthier suburban counterparts. Inner-city five-year-olds, for example, might know fewer than 200 words. "They knew what 'under" meant, but not 'over,'" Doherty says, "They could point to their ear, but not their ears, because they didn't know what plurals meant."

Because the Direct Instructions are so organized—each year's curriculum is neatly divided into 150 lessons—City Springs administrators know precisely how well their students are doing. In October, for example, Vanessa Merrick, who oversees teaching at City Springs, could look on a chart (updated every day) posted outside a combined third-fourth grade classroom and see that students in the class are doing well in reading—one group has done two-thirds of the third-grade curriculum, while the other has done 20 percent of the fourth grade material—but that both classes are one-half to one year behind on spelling.

Direct Instruction is controversial. In a recent *New Yorker*, Elizabeth Kolbert listed two of the more common criticisms: (1) It makes inner-city kids spend their days in drill, while suburban kids using other curricula get to play and explore; (2) Direct Instruction is "teacher-proof," since anyone can read a script.

The advocates of Direct Instruction counter that it's not teacher-proof but a subtle technique that must be mastered. Moreover, unlike more free-form instruction, the teacher can't have any bad days; if the student is marching through his lessons every day, the teacher has to keep marching, too. "It's a lot harder to teach Direct Instruction than traditional free-form lessons," Doherty says. "With Direct Instruction, there's no place to hide."

Direct Instruction supporters also believe everyone can use their curriculum, particularly in the early grades where children need to learn phonics and math. Robert Embry sends his own daughters to Roland Park Elementary, one of the schools in his Abell Foundation Direct Instruction experiment, and is quite pleased.

Moreover, there's plenty of time for play. The students have one-hour art classes every week; the day I visited, first-graders were being taught how to draw flowers. There are regular field trips to the zoo and state parks. And one period a day City Springs teaches science from the less structured Core Knowledge curriculum created by E.D. Hirsch (although the school has temporarily suspended Core Knowledge to provide an extra hour of reading).

How is City Springs doing? Judged by its character (student deportment, eagerness to learn, discipline), the school is doing well. Judging from scores on statewide math and reading tests, however, results are only marginally improved from the miserable outcomes that existed in the mid-1990s before Direct Instruction was put into place. Complicating comparisons, notes Johns Hopkins researcher Sam Stringfield, who is studying the school, is the fact that City Springs has an average student turnover of 30 percent per year among its almost entirely minority student population. And the exam itself is quite controversial. An Abell Foundation report by Hoover Institution fellow Williamson Evers argued that the exam is designed to measure how well students worked together in groups, not what they actually learned in school.

In any event, Embry admits "there hasn't been the dramatic improvements that we'd like." He holds Baltimore's school bureaucracy partially at fault. "There's a difference between what we want to do and what the system wants to do." The school does seem to be transforming itself into a place where students come to learn. Principal Bernice Whelchel is particularly proud of the way her students have turned into eager readers. "When I first came here," she says, "children wouldn't pick up a book." In the 1997-98 school year she challenged the school to read 1,000 books. They read 1,900, and she danced the macarena on the roof during a carnival. In the 1999-2000 school year, Whelchel raised her challenge to 5,000 books. When they read 12,000 books, she put on a bunny suit and hopped through the halls.

It's best to see City Springs as a work in progress. Anayezuka Ahidiana has been teaching in Baltimore public schools since 1965, and she takes the long view. "Baltimore City schools have not done what they need to do for these children for three generations," she says. "We're giving these students a better education than we gave their parents. Then their children should do better than they did. If we do what we need to do, in three generations we can get students back to where they should have been" before Baltimore public schools began to break down.

—Martin Morse Wooster

Messmer High School

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Messmer High School, a Catholic institution located in inner-city Milwaukee, is far from the largest or most elite institution in town. But it is a potent success, as a few statistics illustrate: Of all the ninth graders who enter Milwaukee public high schools today, only 28 percent graduate. But at Messmer, which serves poor and working-class Milwaukeeans, fully 95 percent graduate, and 88 percent go on to college.

Messmer has overcome extraordinary hardships. In the economic and urban population contractions of the 1970s and '80s, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee closed many Catholic schools. Of

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the schools given the "death sentence" by Archbishop Rembert Weakland, four, including Messmer, tried to survive on their own, independent of church support. Three of them failed, including one that fled the inner city for a posh suburb. Only Messmer survives.

Located on Milwaukee's North Side, Messmer was founded in 1926. For decades, it served working-class Milwaukeeans who wanted a sound Catholic education. The neighborhood surrounding Messmer had long been racially mixed. (Baseball star Hank Aaron was born two blocks away.) But in the 1960s and '70s, Milwaukee became increasingly segregated into a black North Side and a white South Side. Messmer became increasingly black, poor, and non-Catholic.

The hard economic times of the '70s strained many institutions, including the Catholic archdiocese. In 1983, Messmer was told that for lack of finances it should prepare to be private within five years. In May 1984, Messmer was given one day's notice that it was about to close. For four months, Messmer's doors were actually locked.

Then the school was rescued by the DeRancé Foundation, headed by Harry Jahn, whose family had owned Miller Brewing. Jahn agreed to buy Messmer's building and property and give the school enough funds to have a second chance. (The DeRancé Foundation, now called the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Supporting Fund, has continued to be Messmer's most steadfast ally.)

Archbishop Weakland never entirely severed Messmer's ties with the Catholic Church. The school couldn't recruit at Catholic elementary schools, and official institutional records were carted away. But members of religious orders were still allowed to teach at Messmer, and the school was permitted to call itself Catholic. The curriculum did not change. When other Catholic schools cut religious instruction back to two hours per week, Messmer retained the traditional five hours.

But when Messmer re-opened in the fall of 1984, its enrollment had shrunk from 350 to 115, and the school for the first time had a black majority. It was far from clear Messmer would survive. History teacher Tom Miller is the only member of the faculty who was on staff at that time. In his first year of teaching, Miller recalled, he had to convince a lot of parents that Messmer was still open for business. Many returning students "thought they were betrayed."

Frugality was the watchword. Memos were produced on surplus stationery donated by local businesses. Until 1991, Messmer couldn't afford a copier; so forms were reproduced using an ancient alcohol-based spirit duplicator.

Every long-term Messmer teacher has a story of making do with less. Marilyn Mathey, who has taught math at Messmer since 1985, used to cut up boxes from local liquor stores to show her students the ways that a cube could be divided into sections. Jackie Veith, who's been teaching French and Spanish at Messmer since 1986, saved pizza box inserts to use as grammar flash cards.

From 1984-87 the school had four principals, the fourth being a 72-year-old nun who came out of retirement until a replacement could be named. But then Messmer found a charismatic leader who led the school to stability: Brother Bob Smith. Smith is a Capuchin monk, an order with a special duty to serve the poor. He had served his order in a wide variety of roles, including three years as a parole officer in Detroit. In the mid-1980s, he was doing graduate work; his uncle (also a Capuchin brother) was on the "Save Messmer" committee. Brother Smith became intrigued by the school. In 1986, he joined the faculty. In 1987 he became principal, a position he held until 1998, when he became Messmer's president.

Brother Bob Smith, president, and Jeff Monday, principal, of the Messmer High School.

Long-time Messmer vice-principal Jeff Monday, who succeeded Brother Smith as principal, says Messmer survived for two reasons. "The first was Bob's strong leadership. The second was a lot of praying and faith."

Things improved slowly. The school began to attract some students from the suburbs. Roger Dickson, who is not Catholic, has homeschooled many of his children, but he decided to send his oldest son to Messmer in 1987 to "get a good values-based education." He's been involved with Messmer ever since, and now serves as the school's chairman of the board.

Dickson's decision is not unusual, but his day job is; he's an assistant superintendent of the Kettle Moraine public schools, located in one of Milwaukee's better suburbs. In the office, Dickson says, "people sometimes say things behind my back. But we have to have faith that, in most situations, parents know what's best for the child."

In 1989, Messmer enrolled its most dedicated student, Sherelle Owens. Owens came to the school as a junior with just one credit, yet wanted to graduate on schedule. She was told she would have to work very hard if she wanted to do four years' worth of learning in about half the usual time.

Owens buckled down, studying nights and weekends, and taking courses at a local community college. "I regularly used to see her on Friday nights in the library during basketball games," Monday says. In 1991, Owens *did* graduate on time, and head off to college. She's now a social worker in Milwaukee, but is remembered at the school by an annual prize given to the Messmer student who overcomes the most obstacles to obtain a diploma.

In the early 1990s, Messmer's story began to intertwine with the battle over school choice. When some of the nation's first school-choice experiments began in Milwaukee in 1989, parochial schools were prohibited from applying for the government aid. But in 1991 a state consultant informed Brother Smith that because Messmer was an independent school it might be eligible. The aid was appeal-

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ing because Messmer's finances, though improving, were still tight.

In 1992 Messmer formally applied to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to be part of the Milwaukee choice program. DPI investigators scoured the school for traces of Catholicism. They counted the crucifixes in Brother Smith's office and examined photographs to see if the different colors of his shirts were part of an arcane Catholic code. They studied trophies from the 1940s and '50s to see if the "Catholic League" on the trophies meant the school was "pervasively religious." (At no point, however, did investigators actually talk to teachers or students about what happened in theology class.)

In July 1992, the DPI held a seven-and-a-half-hour show trial on Messmer's application. Brother Smith recalls that government lawyer Robert Paul asked amazingly arcane questions about the history of the Capuchin order and its relationship to the Vatican. The implication was that the Pope himself was somehow interested in acquiring the hard-earned dollars of the Wisconsin taxpayer.

Messmer's application for school choice money was rejected, but the DPI's victory was Pyrrhic. In fall 1992, PAVE, a private voucher program largely funded by Milwaukee's Bradley Foundation, began aiding low-income students at Messmer and local parochial schools. Other donors increased their contributions; among the most generous were Wisconsin Energy, which supplies Milwaukee's gas and electricity, and Jane Pettit, a member of the Bradley family. Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson also visited Messmer several times and repeatedly referred to the school's excellence in speeches.

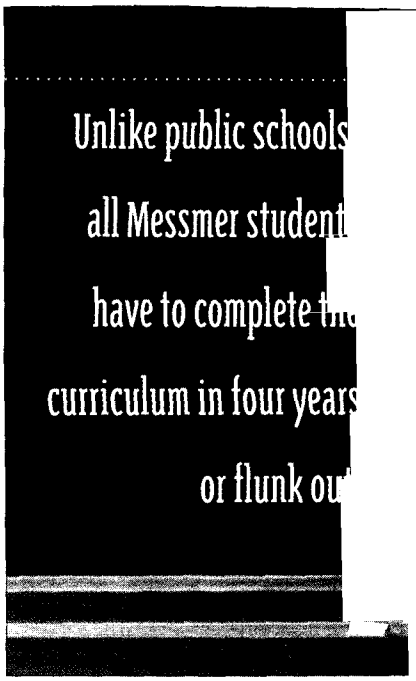
In summer 1998, the Wisconsin Supreme Court declared that the state's constitution allowed parochial schools to take part in the Milwaukee school choice program. The Department of Public Instruction commemorated the decision by trying to impose 330 pages of new regulations on schools that accepted vouchers. But this effort was blocked by the state legislature, and since then state bureaucrats have largely left Messmer alone.

Fall 1998 was a watershed for Messmer. The school was readmitted to the official archdiocesan school system. The school building was retrofitted to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. And in the largest expansion since the 1920s, a nearby convent was torn down and replaced by the Governor Tommy G. Thompson Athletic Center. (The name was chosen by the facility's donor, medical-devices magnate Michael Cudahy.)

By the 1999-2000 school year, Messmer's enrollment had risen to 502, a 9 percent increase over the previous year. The school's students have to pass a tough curriculum in order to graduate, including four years of English, four of theology, three years of math, and two years of a foreign language. And unlike public schools, all Messmer students have to complete the curriculum in four years or flunk out.

There are areas where Messmer students clearly do well. Student paintings and sculptures about the Incas on display in public areas could fetch good prices in professional galleries. But most Messmer students seem to know little about geography. In Jackie Veith's French class, it takes the students three tries to figure out that the Berlin Wall is in Germany, and five tries before they determine that Hanoi is located in Vietnam.

But the school's high college placement rate shows that, on balance, it is succeeding with nearly all its students. There are even some advanced placement classes; some Messmer students take calculus each year, and four to five pass the A.P. exam. Messmer is developing courses with nearby Mount Mary College so that bright Messmer students can get college credit for challenging courses.



This relatively high level of academic achievement is not attained easily. Messmer is in a fairly bad neighborhood, and much security is needed. The section on "attire and grooming" in the student handbook has 12 clauses prohibiting various items from the classroom, including caps, sleeveless shirts and blouses, bandanas, and objects in students' hair. School officials are particularly on the lookout for students with a ripped right pant leg, signifying the wearer is a member of the local gang, the Vice Lords.

Monday and Smith are vigilant against crime and have cordial relations with the Milwaukee Police Gang Squad. Smith has developed a reputation among local hoodlums as a fierce crime-fighter; among the more persistent rumors are that he has a second-degree black belt and that he once fought ten men in a pitched battle and won.

Thanks to this ferocious watchfulness, few Messmer students turn bad while they are in school. In 14 years at Messmer, Brother Smith has expelled only two students for criminal activities, both of them drug dealers. And Messmer's strict Catholic teachings on sexual abstinence (aided by the many students who come from fundamentalist Protestant households) have resulted in only about a half-dozen pregnancies among Messmer girls since 1986.

Messmer is now in the process of extending its methods back to the elementary school level. Administrators recently took over the St. Mary of Czestochowa Catholic school a few miles away, and this past fall the school was renamed Messmer Prep. Classes continue to be held while the building is slowly reconstructed and expanded at a cost of nearly $5 million. Soon local students of any age from kindergarten to twelfth grade will be able to receive a Messmer education.

And so the gritty school once left to wither and die will continue to ensure that struggling families in Milwaukee have a choice far better than anything offered by most of the city's public schools.

—Martin Morse Wooster

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THE AMERICAN ENTERPRISE

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Who Needs God?

By Michael Novak

Michael Novak is the Jewett Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. This is adapted from his chapter in the new collection The Collapse of Communism *(Hoover Press).*

An American couple I know adopted a young boy of three or so from Rumania, one of those orphans brought up mass-production style, never held in human arms, fed by a bottle attached to a mechanical apparatus. Isolated from human closeness and all moral training until he left the orphanage, the child is grown now, handsome, smart, winning in his ways—but absolutely incapable of forming a human relationship, only capable of seeking his own will and his own pleasure. He fears close contact with adults, only pretending to affection as necessary. Cleverly narcissistic, he lies, steals, cheats, whatever he needs to do to obtain what he desires. And all the while, smiling, he charms people by his seemingly open manner.

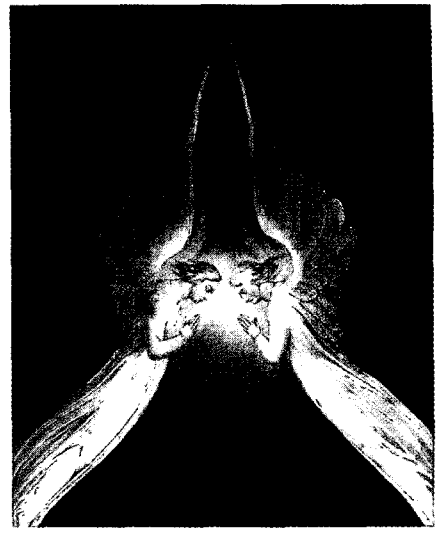
He has already been arrested once for shoplifting, and his teachers at school, for a time in love with him, have reluctantly had to report the times he has stolen things from his classmates. This engaging boy has learned precisely how to deceive. His parents, serious and devout people, are in despair about his behavior. For he is heading for self-destruction and may, they fear, charm innocent and inexperienced people into accompanying him thereto.

It so happens the adoptive mother of this boy is an accomplished free-market economist. And she explains that the totally self-centered impulse that moves this child, the preoccupation with his own physical self-interest, at the expense of all other more noble interests, is remarkably like what the economists conventionally discuss as "economic self-interest." She has even written a lecture to this effect, daring other economists to tell her in what respect the conduct of this narcissistic young man differs from the behavior of their theoretical "economic man."

This challenge infuriates the economists, she has found, but they only sputter and do not answer it. When they have had time to reflect upon it, however, they may find that, more than they explicitly recognize in their published theories, the "rational man" they assume to be acting in their theories is not simply a calculator of self-interest but in fact a highly developed humanistic person, of Jewish and Christian provenance or some correlative tradition. For when they write "rational," they also mean "law-abiding" and basically "honest," "trustworthy," and "morally reliable." They emphatically do not mean a crook, cheat, liar, manipulator, or narcissist with whom it is impossible to have a human relationship.

For economics to work, a deal has to be a deal. A partner one cannot trust brings a high cost in efficiency and a high probability of eventual disaster. For capitalism to function, it requires persons who live out a far richer morality than is exemplified by that unfortunate orphan raised mechanically, evacuated of all moral and emotional sense and made into a pure rational calculator of means and ends.

This child is incapable of internal self-government. He gets what he wants by vectoring around any resistance he meets, like a robot bumping and bouncing along his way. He lives, in short, in a world essentially like the one in which the Communist rulers of his homeland professed to believe we all live—a world of pure materialism with no God and no transcendent right and wrong.



In this child's native Rumania, atheistic Communists set out to eradicate centuries of learning, habits, and traditions. The government aimed to erase "bourgeois culture"—religious morality, privacy of property and thought, individualistic behaviors. In the process, it dulled the most distinctive human mark: the primordial endowment of each citizen with a creative and accountable soul.

Their denial of the dignity of the individual, their reduction of human beings to mere material elements, erases the awareness people have of themselves as persons who reflect and who choose, who launch new actions into history, who accept responsibility for their undertakings. Unlike a horse or a cow, a human being is an active agent—inquiring and understanding, deliberating, judging, deciding. In precisely these ways, a human is made in the image of God, to his unparalleled potential glory.

Communism, denying there is a God, aimed to objectify everything and everybody. Its fundamental premise was materialism. Human beings are, well, just meat. Animated for a time, perhaps, but essentially no more than a packet of chemicals. Instruments. Means. The individual should expect to be expended,

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sacrificed, used up, like a thing.

The anti-religious materialistic theories of Communism had no resonance among the populations subjected to them. Some Communists did end up aligning themselves with this creed, in the belief this placed them on the side of idealistic justice and compassion. But these sentiments of sacrifice and common good were borrowed—from Christianity and Judaism.

Indeed, Communism's deepest symbolic resonances emanated from, and traded upon, pre-existing understandings of Judaism and Christianity. Among these are the expectation of a New Jerusalem, and the sacrifice of self for others like the ritual lamb, in the image of the Savior.

In the end, though, Communist atheism led easily to unspeakable acts of cruelty, because it insisted no human has any worth apart from contributing to the triumph of the Party. If a man will not contribute to the Collective Will, he is without value and may be disposed of. First, though, some utility may be squeezed from him. If necessary, squeeze hard.

Against Communists who tyrannize, one cannot appeal to morality, or natural law, or bourgeois decency. One cannot appeal to the figure of Christ or to the commandments of God. Communists have their orders; they overcome their feelings and do what is required to turn a man into a means for the Party's ends. Feelings can be trained, as can minds.

What is an individual man, after all? "Truth" and "honor" are just empty words. Human liberty is a sham because we are slaves to "dialectical materialism." God is just a neural reflex. There is no transcendent order that binds our conscience or limits our will.

True materialists deny any standard of truth, moral integrity, and goodness by which humans are every moment being judged. For the materialist, there is in man no internal source of dignity. For the right cause, as numerous twentieth-century materialists demonstrated, all and anything can be done—even murder, torture, betrayal, and extermination.

Paradoxically, however, ruthless materialism ended up leading a great many of its victims to God. For under the systems of imprisonment, torture, and public confession established in places like the USSR, citizens discovered evidence of the presence of God at the core of their own beings. The prison literature of our time is full of such testimonials.

The typical pattern went like this. In the process of administering one of the more than 20 different degrees of torture listed in the KGB handbooks, the tormentor would at some point tell his victim that there is no point in resisting. "Why put everybody through the pain? No one will ever know what happens here. It has no significance. Neither your resistance nor your confession will affect the outcome of History. Just be pragmatic. Write what I request. Why not? Bourgeois prejudices? You are too intelligent for that. No one is ever going to know what you or I will do here. Consider yourself a forgotten man. Be practical. Sign now. There is no such thing as truth. It is only a matter of making a decision. The sooner I can go home the better for me—and for you."

At this point, a light would often go on in the victim's head. "My torturer is claiming all the power. But he is actually confessing something else. There is something he wants from me that he does not have. So he *does not have* all the power. What he needs is this: that I should conform. He needs my will. He needs my denial that there is any such thing as truth. Only then will his philosophy be confirmed. As long as I remain faithful to my own beliefs, my existence unsettles him. I will not tell a lie. So long as I can hold out for that principle, my existence shows him that his philosophy is false.

"Of course, he will overwhelm me. He can break me with pain. He can take away my mind and my liberty with drugs. But the real power in this relationship is mine. He cannot get what he wants unless I freely give it to him. It is not enough for him to force me, to destroy me—that would be only an instant's work. I am beyond his reach in the sanctuary of my consciousness, in my fidelity to the light."

Along this harsh path, thousands of victims came to know themselves at a depth they had never experienced before. When their bodies ached with pain from beatings, and from the application of electrical current, and from being contorted for hours in positions of excruciating pain, they learned that the light of truth inside themselves, to which they were trying to be faithful, cannot properly be said to be part of themselves.

Their initial view was that they were being faithful to themselves, clinging to their own minds and wills. When the pain became intense enough, however, they realized that they were not really suffering for themselves. If that were so, why not just surrender and make the pain go away? Why not be pragmatic?

Rather, it seemed certain that in being faithful to the truth and calling up stubborn courage, a person was answering to something that did not belong to himself, something that called from outside, something not reducible to him. His mind and will became focused in a direction contrary to everything good for his own bodily comfort. Why was he working against his own self-interest, narrowly considered?

The answer: Because the light in my mind is something I participate in, it is not reducible to me. This light approves of my liberty and grows brighter with my own acts of responsibility to it. This light seems to be what people mean when they speak of God. From it, strength emanates, and with it one feels better and truer than with anything else in the world. And even more comforted, despite the wracking pain and weariness. There is nothing arcane in this. Simple people have often seen it more clearly than sophisticates.

In the act of fidelity to the light—the resolve not to be willingly complicit in any lie—a man becomes aware of a dimension of his being never before glimpsed with such clarity. He develops a powerful personal dignity. And this cannot be taken away from him without his consent. Later he may weaken and give in. But he does not have to fight later, only now. He needs only to concentrate during this staccato second, one second at a time, on the light within.

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In Real Life

FIRST-PERSON AMERICA

HERALD ANGELS

By Hendrik Mills

HARLEM, MONTANA—Here in the small-town West, you can still go Christmas caroling anywhere without suffering an ACLU-style attack. Most recently, we were at home with the kids having piano lessons when my wife cried out, "There are Christmas carolers outside!" All nine of us—the five in our family, plus three visiting children and the piano teacher—rushed outside, and saw a flatbed trailer full of people sitting on hay bales. When they finished singing, they called "Come on!" to us. The only one free to go at that time was me; so I ran inside, put on socks and shoes, a hat and coat, and climbed aboard.

Our first stop after I joined the crowd was the Vet's Club Bar on the west edge of town. As a little sixth-grade girl led the way into the tavern, somebody asked if it was okay for under-age kids to be in a bar. One of the singers, who happens to be the town clerk, jokingly replied, "According to ordinance 407(6)(b), it's all right." "Well, if Ralph says it's legal, then it's legal," somebody else laughed, and we all trooped in. The dozen or so of us assembled in a semi-circle near the bar, opened our hymnals to "Silent Night," and began singing. Patrons and bartender were for the most part mildly amused; some were just a little bit embarrassed. One man said he wanted to sing, and weaved over to stand near us, but didn't actually sing. Then we sang "Jingle Bells" and "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." Some of the patrons waved goodbye and wished us "Merry Christmas" as we departed.

We proceeded through the town at about ten miles per hour, sitting on hay bales. The truck and trailer were owned by the couple sitting next to me, and their teenage son was driving. At the next bar, where we serenaded only three quiet patrons and the barmaid, someone ran across the street to a cafe and lured out a young girl who is known for her good singing voice. Her grandmother, who owns the cafe, told her to "Go ahead and sing with them!" but asked her to come back and continue working after the caroling was over.

Veteran carolers in the group remarked that the night's temperature—in the 20s—was the warmest in memory for a caroling night. I listened to older neighbors reminisce about caroling in past years at 20 below zero. The full moon, the brightest in decades because it coincided with the winter solstice, added to our exhilaration.

We chorused at will, anywhere the collective whim of the company took us. As we trooped into a gas station convenience store to sing, Nancy, the mother of our driver, exclaimed, "I don't think I've had this much fun in years!" In a gambling casino we sang "Joy to the World," as the somewhat stunned and inebriated patrons watched us; one stood next to me, sharing the sheet music and "sort of" singing along. Another took off his hat and pretended to pass it around for an offering.

At a retirement home, a 90-year-old man known locally as Uncle Bill stood in his doorway listening to us sing for him, and tears came into his eyes as he said "You have no idea…" Overcome by emotion, he reached down and gave the littlest grade-school girl a hug. Then two ladies, one a grandmother and one a teenager, gave Uncle Bill a hug before we left.

Our little band also caroled in the supermarket, in front of my mother's house, in the elementary principal's dining room, and at other homes and businesses. We were celebrating Christmas, not just "the holidays," and not once did anyone object or ask us to leave. At 9:45 p.m., when I thought we were just getting warmed up, the crowd willed that we adjourn to Barb's house for hot chocolate, schnapps, and cinnamon buns.

Over treats, I found out that this evening hadn't been "planned." Royal and Nancy and their son had simply hitched the hay trailer to their pickup truck and driven into town, stopping at various houses with the same invitation they gave me: an on-the-spot "Let's go caroling!" Having tradition on their side, they succeeded in getting the ball rolling without much trouble. The post-modernist grinches haven't yet succeeded in killing off the compelling charm of Christmas, at least not in Harlem, Montana.

Schoolteacher Hendrik Mills writes periodically for The American Enterprise.

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Who Stole the Grinch?

©2000 Universal Studios. Jon Balzdorff

Why can't we be content with our classics?

Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas has taken Theodor S. Geisel's 1957 children's book and pumped it up into a loud, spastic "family film"—or, to be more accurate, a holiday-season cash cow. Like an electrical socket that has too many Christmas lights plugged into it, the movie sparks, sizzles and even occasionally explodes. Only Hollywood could take a gentle bedtime story and turn it into an overblown extravaganza that couldn't be rated G.

Never mind that generations of children have adored Geisel's tale, as well as the faithful short cartoon adaptation that was made in 1966. Director Ron Howard and producer Brian Grazer must consider the original story to be outdated and passé, so brazen are their alterations here. The fact that Geisel's widow reportedly signed off on the finished film doesn't bode well for future Seuss adaptations.

Among the more galling changes is the filmmakers' politically correct version of the Grinch. He's still a rascal, to be sure—the only worthwhile moment is when star Jim Carrey, buried beneath amazing make-up, reenacts the character's devilish grin—but the new movie goes to great lengths to suggest that the Grinch's mischievous nature isn't his fault. In an embarrassing amalgamation of Hollywood hooey and modern relativism, a ridiculous flashback shows an 8-year-old Grinch being teased by the kids of Whoville. Forget about Geisel's lyrical suggestion that the Grinch's "heart was two sizes too small," apparently it was a tough childhood that sent the grumpy guy up to Mt. Crumpit.

The movie gets even more haughty in its depiction of the Whos, those mild, fun-loving creatures who celebrated the spirit of Christmas even after all of their presents had been stolen in Geisel's book. Here, they're the meanies who picked on the young Grinch, snotty elitists who race from store to store stockpiling presents and drowning their town in Christmas decorations. There's even a scene in which the Grinch lectures the Whos on the commercialization of the season, a message that's hard to take from a movie that has its stocking stuffed with merchandising tie-ins.

These missteps are the results of adults imposing their own "improvements" on Geisel's original tale, which largely explains why the film fails to capture the story's childlike magic. To compensate, the filmmakers haul out swirling special effects, eye-popping sets and outlandish costumes—just the sort of gaudy wrapping that's meant to distract from the mediocre present inside.

There's a desperation to such ostentatiousness, one that's most clear in the low-brow ways the movie caters to its target audience of kids. Ostensibly working from the common knowledge that babies like things bright and noisy, the filmmakers turn the Grinch's sled into a rocket ship and his lair into a frantic version of Chutes and Ladders. There's even a car chase—yes, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* now has a car chase—through Whoville's town square.

We're given a sense of why the filmmakers felt all of this was necessary in another of the Grinch's asides: When he fails to scare a little Who girl, he turns to the camera and complains that today's movies and television shows have left kids desensitized. And so the filmmakers pile on the frantic action and gross-out humor, simply because they know such gags will guarantee a reaction.

Parents who still read *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* to the delight of their children know that most of today's movie-going kids are being underestimated, not under-stimulated. If the enduring popularity of Geisel's book doesn't prove that, then the success of quieter, more thoughtful children's movies such as *Babe* and *The Iron Giant* do. One of the many new bits in this Grinch is a scene in which the sleeping mayor of Whoville unwittingly kisses a dog's rear end. Will kids laugh their heads off at this sort of thing? Of course. Would they appreciate a film that wasn't quite so coarse? Only if we give them the chance.

—Josh Larsen

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The Coming Internet Privacy Scrum

By Naomi Schaefer

Judging from the press offices of various congressmen on both sides of the aisle, 2001 is going to be the year for Internet privacy. It seems everyone in Washington is floating some proposal to protect Internet users from the federal government, from big corporations, or just from their own ignorance about this new medium. More than 50 bills were introduced in Congress in 2000 alone.

Most recently, Senators John McCain (R-Ariz.), John Kerry (D-Mass.), Spencer Abraham (R-Mich.), and Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) have unveiled the Consumer Internet Privacy Enhancement Act. "Our bill," explains Abraham, "does not regulate the Internet. It empowers consumers." Who could be against that?

Over the next year or so, congressmen will face enough Internet regulation proposals to wallpaper the Capitol. Rob Taylor, counsel for the Senate Commerce Committee, notes there is bipartisan support for "some type of legislation." Indeed a recent poll that asked Americans about their "greatest concerns about the next century" found "a loss of personal privacy" ranks number one, above both terrorism and global warming.

There are bases for such fear. Late in 1999, 20-year-old college student Amy Boyer was murdered in New Hampshire by a stalker who tracked her down after buying her Social Security number from an Internet information broker for $45. Earlier, actress Rebecca Schaeffer was killed by a crazed fan who traced her through driver's license records sold by the state of California. These sorts of basic safety issues are now on their way to being solved by congressional bans on Internet traffic in such data.

But numerous prickly and more subtle privacy issues remain unresolved. There are, for instance, many questions about the security of financial, health, and other information consumers entrust to the Internet. In 2000, hackers managed to enter a number of prominent, supposedly secure, Web sites containing sensitive private information. The attacks left many consumers wondering how deep cybercriminals have been able to burrow, and how much personal data about various companies' customers they could access.

And people aren't worried only about hackers. Recently, the FBI set off a firestorm when it unleashed an Internet surveillance program called Carnivore, which can be set up on any Internet service provider (ISP) and be used to search every message that passes through the system for a given bit of information. The details of the program are still quite vague, and a federal court has ordered that Carnivore be examined by a group of independent experts, most likely at a university.

While the FBI must first have an official warrant to read a suspect's e-mail with Carnivore, once the program is installed it can read every other user's mail—somewhat like the police obtaining a search warrant for one residence, but having the option to turn every house in the neighborhood upside down. And it's not just ordinary users who are scared. "Every ISP worries about how Carnivore may cause them to violate their legal obligations" to protect their users' privacy, explains Andrew Shen, a policy analyst at the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

"Government has been the traditional invader of privacy," warns Deborah Pierce, staff attorney for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a non-profit privacy advocate group. "Before computers, government was the only entity with huge files about citizens."

Others insist the problem goes far beyond government invasion. "Privacy isn't what it used to be under the Fourth Amendment," laments Mike O'Neil, counsel for Americans for Computer Privacy. Once, "your personal property was at home, and the government needed a warrant to search it based on probable cause." Today, people "entrust their most private information to third parties." And they do so believing the information will be as safe as if it were in a locked box in their attic, but often it isn't.

Jason Catlett, president of a firm called Junkbusters, argues that corporate infringements on privacy are today's biggest threat. "While the government has great power, it has been traditionally restrained by law, whereas corporate profilers have very little legal restraint placed upon them," says Catlett. Many companies involved in e-commerce, however, are downplaying consumer privacy worries, even in the case of Carnivore. Jay Whitehead, CEO of EmployeeService.com, argues "We would be outraged if SWAT teams didn't show up at a hostage takeover even though innocent people are involved; so why are we so horrified when they show up on the Internet even though some innocent people might be inadvertently monitored?"

For the last several decades, however, private corporations have been able to collect information as efficiently as the government. "Junk mail," which results when companies sell information about their customers' buying habits to other firms, has existed for decades. But the Net now makes personal information

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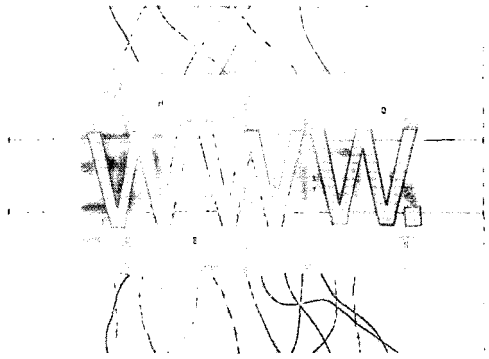
much easier to acquire. "If you think about technology in any of its forms," Andrew Shen says, "what you see is an amazing development of speed, computing power, computing storage."

Two companies that have recently raised concerns among consumer advocacy groups are Toysmart and DoubleClick. The former went bankrupt this year and tried to auction off all of its online customer information, in violation of its own privacy policy, which stated that information given by consumers would only be used by Toysmart itself. DoubleClick, a consumer profiling company, has tried to match anonymous online profiles of people's Internet browsing habits with their actual identities. This is accomplished by using a "cookie"—a mechanism that allows a Web site to record a consumer's comings and goings.

The manipulation of Internet cookies is less like someone looking at your credit card statement than like someone following you around for a day, except rather than just noting that you shopped at the Gap, they would know exactly which pieces of clothing you looked at. A company could learn that you looked up information on prostate cancer, or AIDS, or performed an Internet search for bankruptcy lawyers. A company might use that information for its own purposes, or sell it to insurance companies, employers, or others.

Of course, some people understand the privacy risks they run and decide to go ahead anyway. ISPs that require users to let their browsing be monitored in return for free Internet service have proven popular. Many e-commerce businesses argue strongly that there should be no Internet regulation, that firms must be given room to regulate themselves. But advocates like Deborah Pierce of the Electronic Frontier Foundation believes the country could use "some overarching privacy regulation." Jason Catlett of Junkbusters argues that the nation is "tormented by the fact that we have no comprehensive data protection."

While some corporations collect data, others sell tools to make it easier for Internet users to keep it to themselves. You can buy software that, for example, manages cookies and generally reduces the amount of "data exhaust" from your Web browsing. Although such software is useful, advocates like Deborah Pierce say it is "not going to be sufficient if people have no legal rights to privacy." Companies, she argues, "have an economic incentive to exploit personal information for greater revenues and lower costs" that must be counterbalanced.



Like many companies, Predictive Networks sends personalized advertisements to consumers based on their purchasing profiles. But it is also hiring outside consultants to advise the company on its privacy policies. The company uses technology which automatically deletes all of the composite information once the consumer profile is completed. This protects consumers in the event that the company's data is, say, subpoenaed by the federal government.

Citing the history of this company among others, lawyer Harvey Silverglate argues that "the Internet is developing, and it's very difficult at this early point to know how it will evolve, what problems will arise, and what solutions will be necessary." The legislation now pending is certainly a jumble. Mike O'Neil of Americans for Computer Privacy sums up the situation: "There are so many ideas out there; many are combined into one bill; they just take a range of issues that deal with government privacy issues, corporate privacy issues, cybercrime, and throw them all in together."

O'Neil suggests more "deliberation and attention be given to all of these issues" before any legislation is passed. Is there an urgent need for new regulations? How many of these problems can be addressed by existing laws? The Federal Trade Commission, for instance, is suing Toysmart. Individuals can file civil suits over any breach of contract by an Internet company. Government invasions of privacy like those that could occur with Carnivore are being tested in the courts using existing wiretapping guidelines.

Many of the organizations and legislators involved with these questions insist that one addition to current law is needed immediately: a requirement that Internet companies use "fair information practices." In general, this would ensure that (1) no information could be collected without some sort of affirmative consent from the user (clicking on a "yes, I understand your policy" kind of button), (2) information collected for one purpose would not be used for another, and (3) users would have a way of finding out what sort of information about them exists. These seem like reasonable principles, and ones that will not need much amendment, regardless of changes in technology over the coming years.

Even Silverglate, who hopes most of these questions will be settled legally only after the market has failed to address them, says he would favor a simple rule like this. "Any ISP or e-commerce outfit or anybody else has an obligation to disclose in plain English what their privacy policy is, and, having disclosed, they would have a legal obligation to adhere to it. Non-adherence would constitute fraud."

Such simple legislation will not satisfy many of the legislators and consumer groups with a stake in this issue, however. Some want legislation to affirm privacy "as a fundamental human right," while others demand an "information-privacy czar" whose job would be to regulate Internet companies. Some want government to regulate Internet content; others don't think the government can even regulate itself effectively and should keep out of the private sector entirely. Debate promises to rage in the months ahead.

Naomi Schaefer is an assistant editor at Commentary.

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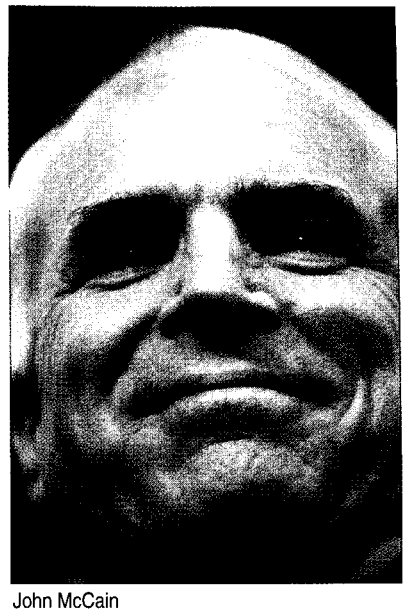
Hollywood Report

John McCain, Culture Warrior



John McCain

Later this spring, at about the time the film industry lines up to collect the Oscar statuettes they award themselves in March, studio executives are scheduled to be swearing to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth back in Washington in U.S. Senate hearing rooms. Leading the Hollywood witnesses through their oaths, and the questioning that will follow, will be John McCain, chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, ex-fighter pilot turned culture warrior.

McCain emerged as the Senate's point man against Hollywood last fall, when he presided over hearings about a Federal Trade Commission report revealing that studios aggressively market R-rated films to children. That placed him at the center of a storm that could eventually hit L.A. harder than the Santa Ana winds.

Already, *Entertainment Weekly* has tagged McCain "Judge Dread." Certainly the ex-POW will be harder to marginalize than some of the other members of congress who have sparred with Hollywood. For one, John McCain is more agile at cozying up to the press. He personally returned *TAE*'s call asking about his next move. Plus, McCain enjoys an affection from film industry players that eludes other conservative politicians.

"I've known John a long time," Warren Beatty told the *Los Angeles Times* last year, "I love the guy." Dreamworks' David Geffen, Universal's Ron Meyer, and Warner's Alan Horn have all written checks to McCain. During the presidential primaries, McCain held a $1,000-a-person fundraiser at the Beverly Hilton and had no problem filling the room.

Even more unusual is the fact that McCain has his own little movie deal brewing. In late 1999, riding high in presidential politics, McCain sold the film rights to his military memoir, *Faith of Our Fathers,* to Barry Diller's USA Films for $100,000. One script draft has been completed, and actor Ed Norton has reportedly expressed interest in it. McCain himself has talked about the potential film with Robert Duvall. Some insiders say this deal may be more about Hollywood trying to ingratiate itself with a powerful Washingtonian than about actually making a movie. In any case, after what McCain seems to have planned for the industry in the wake of the FTC report and the hearings last fall, he may not be able to get a flight to LAX, let alone a premiere in Westwood.

John McCain was slow to tune in to the issue of Hollywood slime (he wasn't even planning to attend committee hearings on the film industry until the Columbine shootings sparked his concern, according to Capitol Hill sources). But today, he seems to be on the same page as Senator Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), who first pushed the Senate to consider cultural pollution by the film industry three years ago.

It doesn't take a government report to know that Hollywood is trying to rope in children, often using questionable means. Anyone with a remote control who turns on the WB channel or Fox will have enough evidence to sway most juries—which, according to top-level sources organizing the hearings, may well be where McCain and Brownback want their campaign against Hollywood headed.

Under pressure last fall, most studios agreed to change their marketing techniques, but McCain views those concessions as weak compared to what ought to happen. One option being considered if Hollywood doesn't clean up its act is legislation formulating a code of conduct similar to the rules once set by the National Association of Broadcasters, or the old Hays code followed by movie makers. And if the industry fails to live up to it? They then subject themselves to laws against false and deceptive advertising.

Then there is the threat of lawsuits like those that unraveled the tobacco industry. "Those are deep pockets," says one Republican staffer, referring to the studios. "It may actually be the trial lawyers who would help us, bizarrely enough." Already, families of the victims of the Paducah, Kentucky, school shooting have filed lawsuits against entertainment companies, complaining their products created the mindset that caused the murders. Early on, Brownback was smart enough to persuade major public health organizations such as the American Medical Association to publicly acknowledge that there's a causal connection between exposure to violent entertainment and increased personal aggression and violence. "It's starting to look more and more like Big Tobacco," says one staffer. "We've found our Joe Camel."

Whether McCain can make genuine progress in shielding children from the excesses of Hollywood remains to be seen. Nonetheless, John McCain is planning another trip on the Straight Talk Express, right down Sunset Boulevard. And what he really wants is to direct.

—John Meroney

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Flashback

TO KNOW NOTHING OF WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN
IS TO REMAIN EVER A CHILD—*Cicero*

T.R. vs. the Dictionary

From boyhood, Theodore Roosevelt had been a notoriously bad spelle; so as President he simply rewrote the rules of orthography—until a swarm of spelling bees stung him back to his senses.

The Spelling Reform Association had been founded in 1886 by Melvil Dewey, a dozen years after he had immortalized himself in the nation's libraries by siring the decimal cataloging system. America's spelling reformers wanted to simplify and rationalize our lexicon, for reasons ranging from the anti-colonialist (why shackle ourselves with sense-defying British spellings?) to the ridiculously practical: Lopping off superfluous letters would shorten books and save ink and paper, claimed the champions of "simplified spelling." Moreover, American schoolchildren could shave a full two years off their studies if liberated from spelling drills.

Defenders of traditional spelling occupied the high ground of poetry and custom, while the reformers trotted out efficiency, that god of turn-of-the-century progressivism. The ensuing debate wended its way down colorful byways. The simplified spellers brandished a finding of an underemployed worker at the U.S. Pension Office, who had counted 1,690 different spellings of the word "diarrhea" in pension applications. To this, the mossback Librarian of Congress Ainsworth R. Spofford replied, "Is there any phonetic system which could bring about a uniform spelling of that word?"

The game was really afoot when the spelling reformers found a sugar daddy in the person of Andrew Carnegie. The philanthropic steel titan counseled a name change for the organization ("reform" scares people, he insisted), and so the Spelling Reform Association became the Simplified Spelling Board. It was studded with such eminences as Nicholas Murray Butler of Columbia, David Starr Jordan of Stanford, Mark Twain, and William James.

In March 1906, the SSB released a list of 300 words crying out for orthographic reform. Some of the recommendations had already slipped into accepted usage: "honor" without the *u*, "center" instead of "centre," "axe" with the *e* chopped off. But others looked bizarre: The SSB suggested replacing the "ed" in such words as "kissed" and "missed" with a *t*. "Purr" would lose an *r*, and such words as "dullness" and "fullness" would be stripped of an *l*. "Through" would become "thru," and "thoroughly" would shrink to "thoroly." It all seemed so...mechanical. Rather like a metric system for words.

Literary critic Brander Matthews, chairman of the Simplified Spelling Board, called this "simplification by omission." And he had a friend in the White House. So in August 1906, with characteristic impulsiveness, President Roosevelt directed the Government Printing Office to adopt simplified spelling in all publications of the executive department. His order was not "far-reaching or sudden or violent," averred Roosevelt, but only a modest effort "to make our spelling a little less foolish and fantastic."

It may have been the worst miscalculation of T.R.'s career.

The press heaped ridicule upon the Rough Rider, who had a self-deprecating sense of humor but did not much like to be deprecated by others. The *Baltimore Sun* asked how the President's surname would be rendered in the new spelling: "Rusevelt" or "Butt-in-sky"? In best conspiracy-sniffing fashion, the *Rochester Post-Express* declared, "It is a scheme financed by Carnegie, backed by certain large publishing interests, and designed to

carry out an immense project for jobbery in reprinting dictionaries and school books." Abroad, observers wondered just what had happened to the unruly and libertarian Americans. "Here is the language of 80 million people suddenly altered by a mere administrative ukase," marveled an English paper. "Could any other ruler on earth do this thing?"

In the end, the Supreme Court refused to follow the President, as did the House of Representatives, which voted 142-24 to overturn T.R.'s order. The President withdrew his spelling edict and admitted defeat in this "undignified contest." In a letter to Brander Matthews he attempted to shift the blame, asserting that "the one word as to which I thought the new spelling was wrong—thru—was more responsible than anything else for our discomfiture."

Unbowed, Roosevelt vowed to use simplified spelling in his own correspondence, and he did so fitfully. Discussing his Presidential legacy, he wrote to a friend, "I have succeeded in getting thru some things that I very much wisht, altho not always in the form I most desired."

Roosevelt's crusade was carried on for some years by the *Chicago Tribune*, bastion of Midwestern Anglophobia, which between 1934 and 1975 used such spellings as "autograf," "ameba," "burocrat," and "rime," until finally its editors decided that enuf was enough.

—Bill Kauffman

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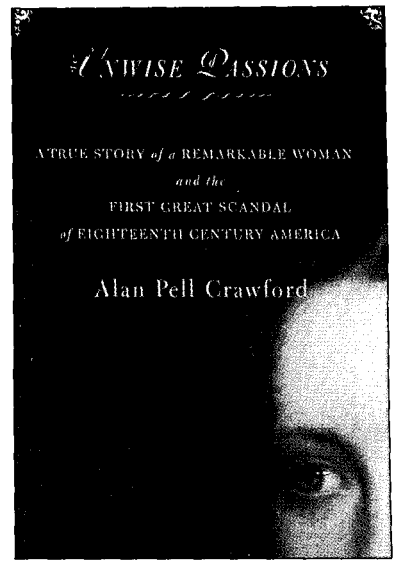
Booktalk



VIRGINIA WAS FOR LOVERS

By Bill Kauffman

Unwise Passions: A True Story of a Remarkable Woman—and the First Great Scandal of Eighteenth-century America
By Alan Pell Crawford
Simon & Schuster, 333 pages, $27.50

How Nancy Randolph, "the fetching daughter of one of the greatest of the great planters," became "the Jezebel of the Old Dominion," a woman variously accused of adultery, infanticide, murder, prostitution, and miscegenation (and that's just what her family said about her), is the subject of Alan Crawford's entertaining and often poignant new book.

Nancy's fortune, both good and ill, flowed from her bloodline. "Only a Randolph is good enough for a Randolph," went a Virginia adage, and the resultant intermarriage and madness and mossy languor rivalled Poe's House of Usher. Nancy's saturnine sister Judith married cousin Richard Randolph, a dreamy young laird with antislavery convictions, and Nancy soon came to live with them on a plantation felicitously named Bizarre.

Richard and his brothers acted as young men sometimes will when a pretty 18-year-old girl whose motto is "I must be sought" drops into the house. Nancy "liked to use such words as 'tautology' and 'ecclairissement,' and she sometimes used them properly," writes Crawford, but she seems not to have learned the meaning of "chastity," for an ominous swelling of the belly soon distended Nancy's pleasing form.

On a visit to a cousin's plantation, Nancy woke the household with her nighttime screams; the ladies rushed to her door and managed but a peek at blood-stained sheets before their ministrations were discouraged by Richard. Rumors spread immediately through the network of slaves that "the corpse of a white baby" had been found buried nearby.

In such circumstances, tongues will wag, and Richard was arrested for "feloniously murdering a child said to be borne of Nancy Randolph." He was tried before a packed Cumberland Court House in April 1793, with Randolph testifying against Randolph.

Richard's defense was conducted by an Old Dominion dream team of Patrick Henry and John Marshall, and despite abundant evidence of displays of public affection between Nancy and Richard that transcended the usual in-law pecks on the cheek—and despite the revelation that Nancy had discussed abortifacients with Patsy Jefferson Randolph, Thomas Jefferson's daughter—the charges against Richard were dismissed. Whereupon the defendant stiffed Patrick Henry for his legal fee, and Henry had to sue to get paid.

After Richard's death, Bizarre would be managed by his brother Jack Randolph, who had been kicked out of William and Mary for duelling over the correct pronunciation of a word. Jack won, wounding the "fleshy portion" of his foe's backside and leaving us to imagine what the swordplay must have been like between two duelists with skill more mouseketeer than musketeer.

Black Jack of Bizarre eventually became the legendary Virginia statesman John Randolph of Roanoke. He was a habitual opium user, a bachelor who seems to have nurtured a crush on Andrew Jackson. (Crawford has unearthed a letter in which Randolph suggests "Greek love" to a no doubt dumbfounded Old Hickory.)

Crawford describes Jack Randolph in Congress: "He would saunter into the House chamber and nonchalantly drape his long legs, encased in sleek white riding boots, over the bench in front of him. He would study his gloves or gaze at the ceiling or peruse a book of verse or even affect sleep. Sometimes he had his dogs with him, and he would pay more attention to them than to his colleagues." When roused, he was viciously effective at the forensic arts, and detested and feared by his many adversaries. (Of one, he memorably eulogized, "Like rotten mackerel by moonlight, he shines and stinks.") Randolph was a choleric champion of liberty—and a bitter enemy of his sister-in-law Nancy, whom he accused not only of murdering her infant but of killing Richard, being the "concubine" of a slave, and general whoring.

Jack Randolph was not the sort of man you'd choose for an enemy. He once said of his political opponents: "It is a mere waste of time to reason with such persons. They do not deserve anything like serious refutation. The proper arguments for such statesmen are a strait-waistcoat, a dark room, water, gruel, and depletion." There were no bygones in Jack Randolph's world. He kicked Nancy out of Bizarre and hounded her with poison pen for the rest of his wormwood life.

But Nancy had pluck, and luck. She

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caught the eye of New York aristocrat Gouverneur Morris, ex-U.S. Minister to France, a one-legged cosmopolitan roué. (Rumor had it that a jealous husband had shot Morris's leg off, leaving John Jay to write that he was "almost tempted to wish he had lost something else.")

Morris and Nancy wed, a happy conjugal match of North and South, though in lieu of a gift from their registry Black Jack sent a note calling his sister-in-law a "vampire that, after sucking the best blood of my race, has flitted off to the North, and struck her harpy fangs into an infirm old man."

Morris emerges from *Unwise Passions* a thoroughly engaging character, a man of decency and sardonic dignity, even to an anti-Federalist like your reviewer, while Jack the splenetic opium-eater is as memorable a character as one can find in history. (His last word was "Remorse!")

Crawford presents the evidence with grace and wit—the book is a delightful read—and leaves the verdict on Nancy to the reader. She was guilty of sin if not as sin, yet I'd let her walk, if only to place her again in the Bizarre household, whose cast of characters do credit to its name.

TAE *associate editor Bill Kauffman's books include* America First! *and* Every Man a King.

GROVER CLEVELAND, SERIOUSLY

By Martin Morse Wooster

Grover Cleveland: A Study in Character
By Alyn Brodsky
St. Martin's Press, 456 pages, $35

In our historically illiterate age, we remember the vices of Presidents while ignoring their virtues. So most of us, when thinking about Grover Cleveland, remember that he was a very fat man who had an illegitimate son. But few people, including devotées of the presidency, know what Cleveland did while in office or why he was important.

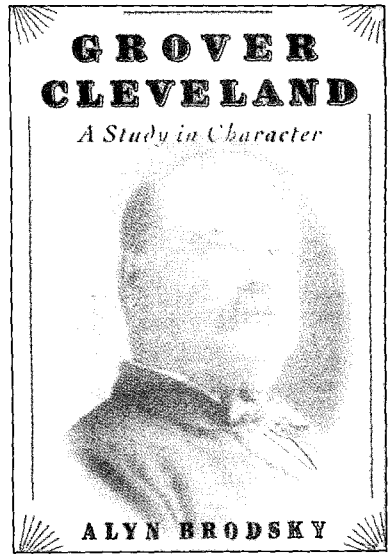
In his latest book, biographer Alyn Brodsky tries—and mostly succeeds—in restoring Cleveland's reputation. Brodsky, a former newspaper reporter and book editor, has a breezy style. He should have resisted the temptation to interrupt his story with irrelevant comparisons to our own times. But aside from these unnecessary efforts to make his story contemporary, Brodsky does a good job in explaining Cleveland's life to his readers—and in explaining why Cleveland was a champion of limited (and honest) government.

Until he was 44, Cleveland's political career was limited to Buffalo, where he served as sheriff and as assistant district attorney. But in 1881, corruption in the city's Republican machine led to Cleveland's election as Buffalo mayor. He proved to be honest, incorruptible, and a foe of patronage, vetoing so many pork-barrel bills that he became known as "His Obstinacy." A year later, he conquered a divided and exhausted Republican Party to become governor of New York.

Two years after that, Cleveland became the first Democratic President in 24 years. But to become President, Cleveland had to overcome what Brodsky calls "an exchange of political filth." A Buffalo widow named Maria Halpin claimed that Cleveland was the father of her ten-year-old son. Cleveland admitted having an affair with Halpin, and to paying fees to an orphanage for the boy after Halpin was committed to an insane asylum. But there's no firm evidence that Cleveland was the father, since Halpin had liaisons with most of the partners in Cleveland's law firm.

Democrats fought back, claiming that the Republican candidate, James G. Blaine, had married his wife a mere three months before the birth of their first child. (Blaine responded, without evidence, that he had married his wife twice—the first time nine months before their child was born.) But Blaine's candidacy was doomed when a supporter slurred the Democrats as the party of "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion"—in other words, boozers, Irish Catholics, and unrepentant Confederates. Outrage over this statement helped Cleveland win a narrow victory.

It should be noted that until Woodrow Wilson reversed the political polarities of the two parties, the Democrats were the small-government party, championing free trade and restraint overseas. Cleveland consistently acted to check the growth of government. In his



first term, his greatest achievement was to curtail the number of Civil War pensions. The pensions were the biggest government program at that time, since a weakening of pension rules in 1873 enabled veterans to claim retroactive pay for any injury which they asserted was war-related. The result was that the pension program increased by 500 percent between 1866 and 1884, and tens of thousands of freeloaders got substantial government checks.

Since veterans tended to vote Republican, Cleveland felt free to act. He vowed to limit pensions to veterans whose injuries were caused by the war. Faced with hundreds of private bills sent to him every day by Congress, Cleveland had each one investigated, finding that the "veterans" demanding aid included deserters, widows who claimed that their husbands died from war-related injuries concealed for 20 years, and one man who insisted that chronic war-related diarrhea made him blind. Cleveland rejected these individual petitions as well as broader efforts by Congress to give checks to anyone who claimed to be a veteran. Cleveland was pilloried by the press and by veterans for his tough stands—but he was right.

As Brodsky shows, Cleveland also resisted the temptation to engage in imperial adventures. He successfully prevented the United States both from going to war with Germany over the Samoa Islands and with Britain over the disputed frontier between Venezuela and

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British Guiana. Nor did Cleveland feel compelled to interfere in Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain. In 1893, a group of American adventurers and bravos ousted the legitimate government of Hawaii and demanded that the U.S. annex the islands. Cleveland refused, but also declined to use force to restore the island's monarchy. Hawaii had to remain an independent republic until the more imperial-minded McKinley administration annexed the islands in 1900.

Cleveland's decisions to do what was right for the country came at great sacrifice. His refusal to inflate the currency in the depression of 1894 led to a loss of over 100 seats in the House of Representatives. Typical of the vitriolic foes of Cleveland was South Carolina Senator "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman, a notorious hothead who announced that President Cleveland "is an old bag of beef and I am going to Washington with a pitchfork and stick it in his fat ribs."

Was Cleveland a great President? Perhaps not. But as Brodsky conclusively shows, Grover Cleveland was a very good President who deserves to be rescued from undeserved obscurity.

Martin Morse Wooster is an associate editor of The American Enterprise.

HISTORY VERSUS OLIVER STONE

by Peter Augustine Lawler

Oliver Stone's USA: Film, History, and Controversy
Edited by Robert Brent Toplin, with commentary by Oliver Stone
University Press of Kansas, 335 pages, $34.95

Oliver Stone makes memorable and maddening films about recent American history—Kennedy's assassination, Nixon's downfall, the Vietnam War, and so forth. He is driven by ideological animosity against anticommunists and a fantastic vision of a completely hidden because perfectly successful vast right-wing conspiracy. Stone's films are full of obvious and overwhelming errors of fact and interpretation.

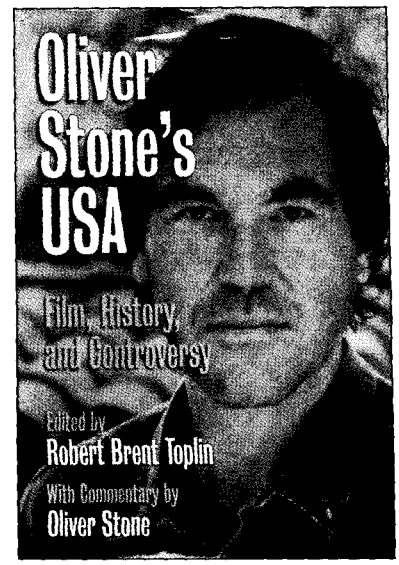
Oliver Stone's USA presents a showdown between Stone and some leading historians. They evaluate his films, and he responds. I opened the book expecting that the clever but deranged propagandist would finally get what's coming to him. But not so! Most of the historians in question say that his films raise important issues and cause us to think disconcerting thoughts. Stone is a good man with admirable concerns about war, political corruption, and the nefarious American Right. With a couple of exceptions—most notably the honorable Stephen Ambrose—the historians not only let Stone off easy, they essentially endorse his films!

Stone is left unturned in part because so many of these historians believe that all historical narratives are subjective anyway. We can't really know what happened; so we evaluate historical tales via mythic imagination and political intention. And, when it comes to JFK, Nixon, and Vietnam, Stone and most of these historians are on the same political side.

These scholars are no match for the filmmaker. Stone for the most part views them with condescension. He knows he is more imaginative than they are, and so do they. Acknowledging that Stone's films are far more influential than their books, one of the historians observes that reading has today become "an elitist endeavor." Most Americans' knowledge of their past now comes from the screen, big and small.

Only Ambrose is treated as a worthy adversary: How dare he make war look good! Stone says that when he saw Ambrose's name on the credits of *Saving Private Ryan* he knew the film would praise heroism under fire. But Ambrose, Stone sneers, has never spent a day in battle himself! Far more truthful is Stone's *Born of the Fourth of July*, which shows that there no heroes, only dupes, in battle.

Stone's genius is his heartfelt combination of Hollywood leftism and redneck populist paranoia. His films are pernicious because he makes up his own truths. For instance, he tells them that the anticommunists were the true enemies of the American people. If JFK had lived, Stone muses, not only the Vietnam War but the Cold War would have ended by 1968, and there would have been a progressive Kennedy dynasty extending



well into the 1970s. That is what Americans really wanted.

Stone's writing is often eloquent, and sometimes actually guided by authentic moral concern. He observes that "we have stripped all spirituality of its meaning, all awe…in the cause of secularism and commerce in human souls."

The most contemptible contributor in this book is not Stone, but former professor of history and presidential candidate George McGovern. McGovern thought Stone's *Nixon* was "superb," mainly because he shows that Nixon slaughtered lots of Vietnamese and our own soldiers "purely for domestic reasons." He even extends Stone's conspiracy theory to the shooting of George Wallace. McGovern also criticizes Nixon's "persecution of Alger Hiss" on the word of the "shabby ex-communist Whittaker Chambers." When the press persecuted Nixon for his pursuit of Hiss, they were giving him just what he deserved, according to McGovern.

According to competent historians aided by materials from the newly opened Soviet archives, however, we now know that Chambers was right. Hiss was indeed a traitor. If only Oliver Stone would research and film the Whittaker Chambers story—a tale of conspiracy and a destroyed American hero more truthful and compelling than anything he has filmed so far.

Peter Augustine Lawler is a professor of government at Berry College.

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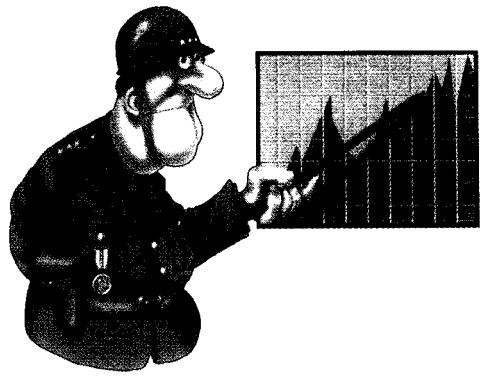
EDITED BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

the Digest



SUMMARIES OF IMPORTANT NEW RESEARCH FROM THE NATION'S UNIVERSITIES, THINK TANKS, AND INVESTIGATIVE PUBLICATIONS

POLITICS

The Facts About PACS

Jeffrey Milyo, David Primo, and Timothy Groseclose, "Corporate PAC Campaign Contributions in Perspective," in *Business and Politics* (April 2000), Carfax Publishing, Box 25 Abingdon OX14 3UE, England.

Milyo of the University of Chicago and Primo and Groseclose of Stanford contend corporate political action committees (PACs) aren't as influential as critics claim: "There is a dearth of systematic and consistent evidence to support the conventional wisdom that money plays a dominant and nefarious role in American politics."

PACs can give no more than $5,000 to a candidate in each two-year election cycle, a figure unchanged since 1976. The number of PACs has remained fairly constant. Between 1986-98, there were about 4,000 PACs in the U.S., spending between $203 and $230 million per cycle.

About 35 percent of PAC spending is made by corporate PACs, while labor supplies 20 percent and associations provide 28 percent. Seventy-one percent of PACs spending over a million dollars each election are labor-related, while corporations account for only 13 percent of these large PACs.

Critics claim corporations use PACs to "buy access" to politicians. Then why do corporations and other groups spend far more on lobbying and general contributions to political parties? In 1997-98, interest groups spent $220 million on PACs—and $2.6 billion on lobbyists. While corporations spent $78.4 million on PACs in this period, they donated $17 billion to charity.

The authors looked at several key industries and discovered corporate PAC spending made up a small percentage of total grantmaking. For instance, in 1998 Philip Morris, the largest tobacco firm, spent $800,000 on PACs, $38.8 million on lobbyists, and $320 million on philanthropy.

The authors conclude, "Corporate PAC contributions are a far less important phenomenon" than critics claim.

Learning About the Military

Peter D. Feaver and Richard H. Kohn, "The Gap: Soldiers, Civilians, and Their Mutual Misunderstanding," in *The National Interest* (Fall 2000), 1112 Sixteenth Street N.W. #540, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Feaver, a Duke University political scientist, and Kohn, a historian at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, surveyed 4,900 military officers, leading civilians, and the general public about foreign policy, morality, and the relations between military personnel and civilians.

Military officers, Feaver and Kohn found, were "much more conservative than the civilian elite, but not more conservative than the general public." Most officers are Republicans and are increasingly likely to state their political identification in talks with subordinates or in letters to the editor.

The military tends to have more Catholics and fewer Jews than the population at large, and rising officers tend to be well-educated white male Catholics. Officers tend to be more devout than civilians: While 66 percent of officers believe the Bible is "the inspired word of God," only 45 percent of civilians do.

Many soldiers see Vietnam as a debacle caused by "civilian micromanagement and 'go along' military leaders." Commanders now try to obtain greater control over how troops are used. A majority of officers believe it's their duty not to merely provide advice but to control "key matters involving the use of force," including the rules of engagement, deciding when forces will leave a region, and the mix of troops to be sent.

The number of veterans in Congress and the Cabinet is falling dramatically. But history shows that as the number of veterans in national politics rises, the likelihood the nation will go to war falls. "This effect," Feaver and Kohn write, "is statistically stronger than many other factors known to influence the use of force."

ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

'Must-Carry' Trash TV

Thomas W. Hazlett, "Digitizing 'Must-Carry' Under *Turner Broadcasting v. FCC* (1997)," in *The Supreme Court Economic Review* (2000 annual), University of

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Chicago Press, 5720 S. Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

In 1997 the Supreme Court ruled that cable companies must carry all over-the-air broadcast stations on their cable systems. In casting the decisive vote, Justice Stephen Breyer stated these "must-carry" rules were necessary in order to preserve a "rich mix of over-the-air programming." American Enterprise Institute scholar Hazlett disagrees, arguing that must-carry results in cable TV viewers having fewer, poorer choices.

Many of the low-power broadcast stations that cable systems are forced to carry are not bold, independent voices, but home-shopping channels. To carry them, cable systems have to drop low-rated, mostly public affairs related channels. About 10 million consumers have lost access to all or part of C-SPAN and C-SPAN2 since Congress first imposed "must-carry" rules in the 1992 Cable Act. Also affected are state counterparts to C-SPAN, such as Michigan Government Television, the California Channel, and TVW in Washington State.

Because must-carry channels clog the cable line, it's harder for new cable channels to get on the air. In 1999, the Freedom Forum dropped plans to create a cable channel about the media because few cable systems could give the network space.

Must-carry rules will cause more problems in 2006, when existing broadcast channels are scheduled to be replaced by two to six digital channels—all of which cable systems must carry. Also affected are direct broadcast system providers DirecTV and EchoStar, who in 2002 might have to add all 1,533 broadcast stations to the 500 cable channels they currently carry. In preparation, the two firms are preparing to spend billions, and DirecTV may have to recall all existing satellite dishes and replace them with cumbersome new ones.

The must-carry regulations, Hazlett concludes, reward broadcast owners and punish most viewers. "By forcing cable operators to include programming less popular with TV subscribers, consumer welfare declines."

SOCIETY

Help the Poor—Fight Crime

Eli Lehrer, "Crime-Fighting and Urban Renewal," in *The Public Interest* (Fall 2000), 1112 16th Street N.W. #530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

"America's success in reducing crime ranks with welfare reform as the greatest social policy triumph of the1990s," reports Lehrer, a contributing writer to *The American Enterprise*. And law-abiding residents of America's inner cities, where crime rates are highest, benefit most:

• *Business flourishes.* Cut crime and inner-city businesses stay open later, encouraging customers to shop in the neighborhood instead of going to a distant mall. Merchants are also more likely to join together and make neighborhoods more pleasant. When better businesses come in, citizen groups work together to get rid of more dubious enterprises, such as liquor stores and bars.

• *Housing improves.* Make neighborhoods safer, and landlords begin to build new homes and renovate old ones. As property values rise, bad landlords who might let their buildings deteriorate or even burn them for insurance money are gradually replaced by better landlords with more money and stronger commitments to their neighborhoods.

• *Neighborhood groups are strengthened.* "Less crime means safer evening hours," Lehrer writes, "and, as a result, more time for activities ranging from summer camps to sewing classes." When crime is less important, these groups can concentrate on other community-strengthening activities.

"The best way to restore communities and lessen poverty," Lehrer concludes, "is to reduce crime itself, not the supposed 'root causes' of crime. The best-conceived and best-funded programs, public or private, will do little good in a dangerous environment."

SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

DDT Is a Good Chemical

A.G. Smith, "How Toxic Is DDT?" and D.R. Roberts, S. Manguin, and J. Mouchet, "DDT House Spraying and Re-emerging Malaria," in *The Lancet* (July 22, 2000), 84 Theobald's Road, London WC1X 8RR, England.

An early triumph of the environmental movement was the banning of DDT, now outlawed in all industrialized countries and much of the Third World. But two studies argue DDT is a safe pesticide, useful in combating malaria.

Smith, a toxicologist at Britain's Leicester University, notes "there are few other chemicals that have been studied in as much depth as DDT." Evidence shows that DDT is less toxic than such well-known pesticides as dieldrin. Would-be suicides who have consumed massive amounts of DDT found the chemical causes vomiting but not death. Nor is there any evidence DDT causes cancer in humans. "DDT can cause many toxicological effects," Smith writes, "but the effects on human beings at likely exposure levels seem to be very slight."

Roberts, Manguin, and Mouchet of the Uniformed University of the Health Sciences contend DDT is still the best pesticide to kill the malaria-bearing *Anopheles* mosquito. They believe alternatives to DDT, such as organophosphates, carnamates, or pyrethroids, are more expensive and less effective. They also show that national malaria epidemics, such as in Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and Swaziland, usually result from a DDT ban. Madagascar ended its 1986-88 malaria epidemic (which killed more than 100,000 people) with the use of DDT. After just two cycles of DDT spraying, malaria rates fell by 90 percent.

The World Health Organization and other international bodies often make a DDT ban a condition of giving aid. But such a ban ensures that disease-ridden Third World countries are given "malaria control" programs that are less effective and more expensive. While "DDT house spraying has its limitations," Roberts and his colleagues argue, "DDT remains a remarkably effective tool that should still be used."

Help Archeology: Restore Private Property

Richard L. Stroup and Matthew Brown, *Deciding the Future of the Past: The Miami*

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Circle and Archeological Excavation. James Madison Institute, Box 37460, Tallahassee, Florida 32315.

Many new projects in the older parts of America's cities are blocked or delayed when historical artifacts are discovered during legally required archeological digs. Stroup and Brown of PERC, an environmental think tank, suggest markets, not mandates, would do a better job of preserving important finds.

Most cities force developers to conduct an archeological dig before beginning construction of a new building. Finding artifacts could result in expensive delays; so there is little incentive to look carefully. Current laws also require archeologists to turn over their finds to museums, but many museums already have far more artifacts than they will ever be able to display or examine.

The government protects archeological sites by the use of eminent domain, but this tool is not effective. In Miami, developer Michael Baumann paid $8 million for a 2.2 acre waterfront site that was found to contain "the Miami Circle," possibly the ruins of a Tequesta Indian temple. The state of Florida and Dade County purchased the land for $26.7 million in 1999. But by blocking the construction of a $90 million apartment complex, the governments lost $1.1 million each year in city taxes, $647,000 in county taxes, and $900,000 in property taxes for schools. It's not even certain the Miami Circle is an ancient site. "If the thing is a septic tank," Florida Attorney General Bob Butterworth told the *Miami Herald*, "then we've just bought a $15 million septic tank, right?"

A better way to preserve archeological artifacts, Stroup and Brown say, is to open archeological digs to the market. They propose allowing connoisseurs to have as much freedom to buy newly unearthed artifacts as they currently have to buy other forms of art. Archeologists could report their discoveries to a central registry for prospective buyers. "An artifact marketed with a history developed by a reputable firm," they write, "especially one affiliated with a reputable museum, is worth more to collectors." The registry would also discourage looters who can't supply documentation of the items they steal from existing sites.

Under this system, landowners could receive a percentage of fees from artifacts found on their property. Such a system would turn archeology from a costly government mandate to a revenue stream for developers. Property owners would be motivated to hire reputable firms to conduct a thorough excavation. Universities and nonprofits would gain revenue from contracting their archeological services.

OTHER COUNTRIES

Exploiting the Holocaust

Gabriel Schoenfeld, "Holocaust Reparations—A Growing Scandal," in *Commentary* (September 2000), 165 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022.

Controversy rages over how much money insurance companies, Swiss bankers, and Western governments should pay survivors of the Holocaust. *Commentary* senior editor Schoenfeld believes this fight will end up doing Jews more harm than good.

As early as 1951, West Germany began to restore property seized during the war and provide pensions to victims of Nazi tyranny. Over the years, West Germany paid $55 billion to 4 million Holocaust survivors as well as to the state of Israel. But East Germany claimed Jews were victims of Nazism, not of Germany. It paid Holocaust survivors nothing.

The collapse of Communism and the reunification of Germany opened the gates to tens of thousands of claimants, who gradually have been compensated by Germany or Eastern European nations. But American trial lawyers see Holocaust victims as a new source of wealth. From 1945 to 1995, fewer than 10 class-action lawsuits were filed by Holocaust survivors; in the past five years, the number has tripled.

Some survivors have sued insurance firms. In many cases, particularly in Eastern Europe, these companies collapsed in the 1930s, were bought out, or were nationalized under Communism. Nor are Swiss bankers as villainous as reports make them out to be. A committee chaired by former Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker spent $250 million examining 4.1 million records surviving from the 1940s and found no evidence Swiss banks practiced "organized discrimination against the accounts of victims of Nazi persecution." The commission also noted the vaunted Swiss bank secrecy laws were created in the 1930s "to protect the assets of persecuted German Jews."

Schoenfeld contends victories Holocaust survivors win in the courts could be Pyrrhic ones. Neo-Nazis are using the trials to revive vile charges that the Holocaust "was just about money." And politicians in Germany, Holland, and Switzerland may be less likely to come to Israel's aid if the courts unfairly blacken these nations' reputations. "One senses that moral and political capital has been heedlessly squandered."

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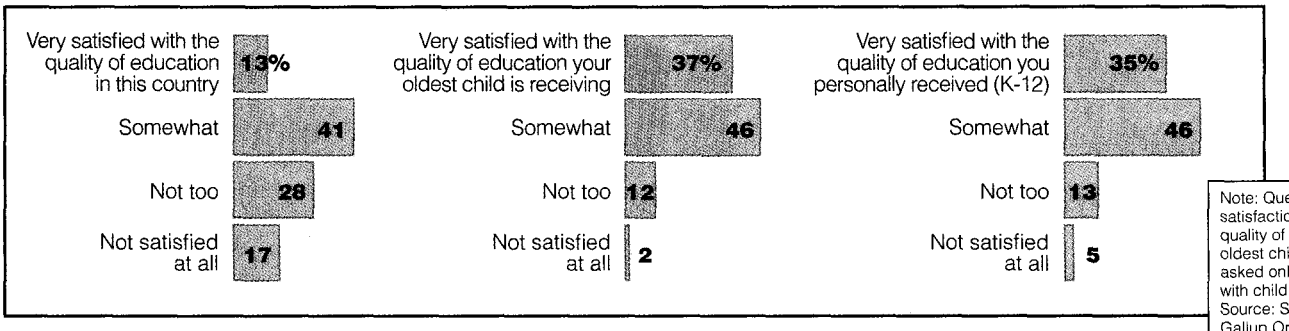
Opinion Pulse

EDITED BY KARLYN BOWMAN

SCHOOLS TODAY

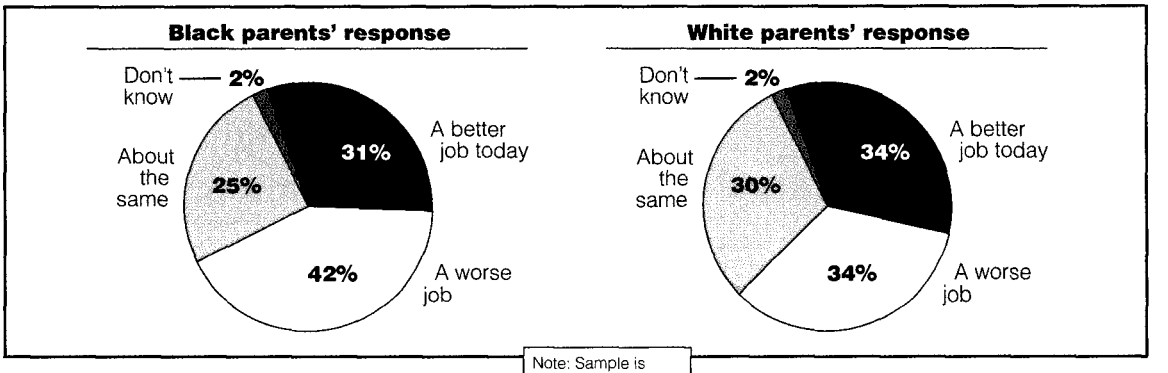
Solid majorities of Americans are very or somewhat satisfied with the quality of education they received and with the quality of schooling their children are receiving. They are less impressed with the quality of education in the country as a whole. Black parents are more likely than white parents to say the schools are doing a worse job today. Both groups feel that the private schools are doing a better job in their area than the public schools are. If they could afford it, 60 percent of black parents would send their kids to a private school; 50 percent of white parents would.

Question: Next, I'd like you to rate your satisfaction with the state of the nation in some different areas. For each of the following, please say whether you are ...



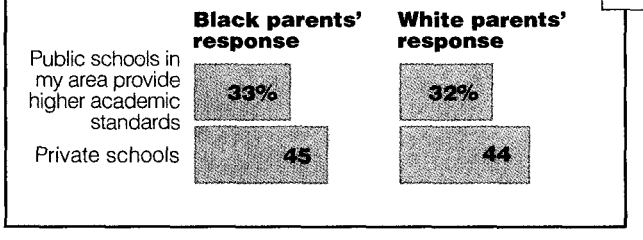
Note: Question about satisfaction with the quality of school your oldest child attends asked only of parents with children in K-12. Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization, August 1999.

Question: Compared to when you were in school, do you think the schools are doing...?

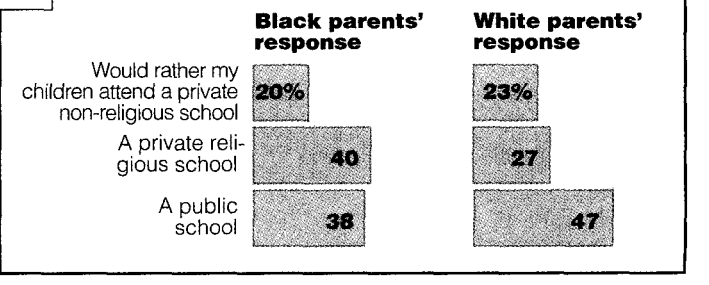


Note: Sample is parents with at least one child in K-12. Source: Survey by Public Agenda, March-April 1998.

Question: In your area, which schools are generally more likely to provide...?



Question: If you could afford it...?



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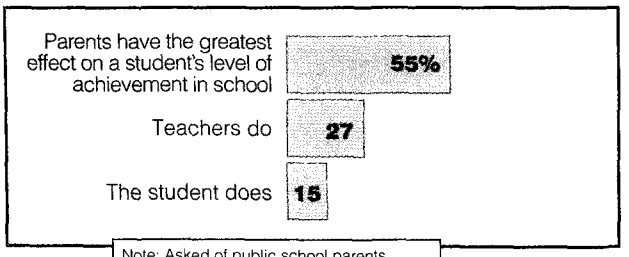
Educational Roles and Responsibilities

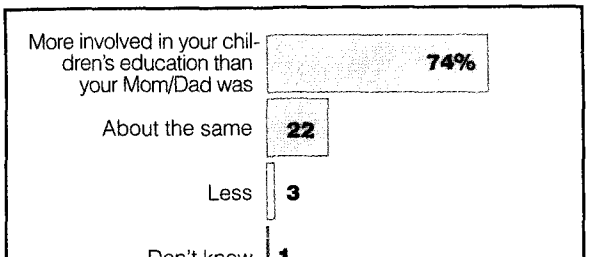
Nearly three-quarters of parents today say they are more involved in their children's education than their own parents were. Parents far more than teachers are thought to have the greatest effect on a student's level of achievement. Most parents believe that a student from a stable family who goes to a poor school is more likely to succeed than one who comes from a troubled family and goes to a good school. People think the federal government has too much influence in the public schools in their community.

Question: In your opinion...?



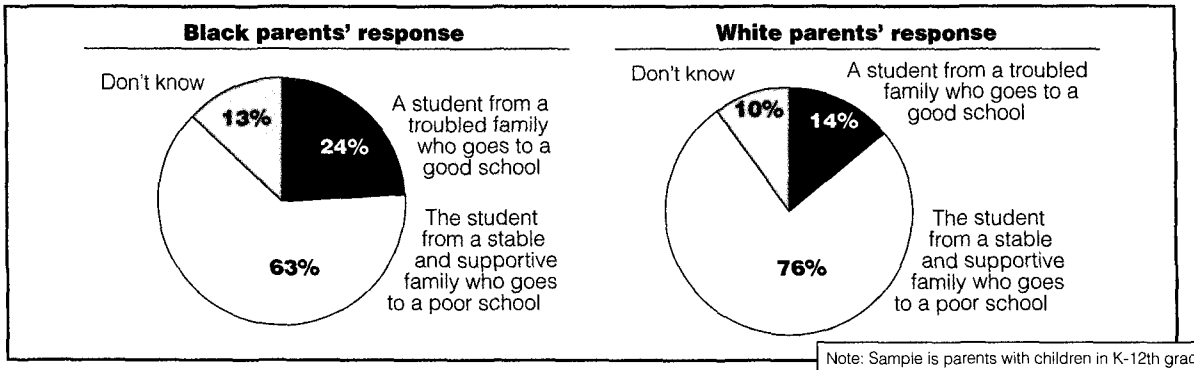
Note: Asked of public school parents.
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for Phi Delta Kappa, June 2000.

Question: Would you say that you are...?



Note: Women were asked about their Mom, men about their Dad.
Source: Survey by Public Agenda , December 1998.

Question: Which student do you think is more likely to succeed?

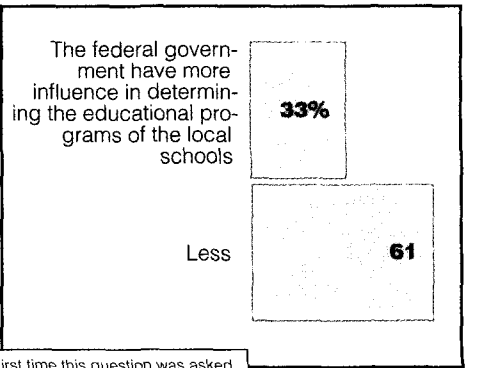


Note: Sample is parents with children in K-12th grade (c).
Source: Survey by Public Agenda, March–April 1998.

Question: Now let's focus on the decisions that affect the public schools in your community. As I name a specific group or individual, please tell me...?

	Too much influence	About the right amount	Too little
The federal government	49%	29%	16%
State government	43	36	15
Local board of education	29	49	18
School superintendent	25	51	18
Local teacher's union	21	35	32
Principals	14	51	31
Students	11	30	56
Parents	7	25	66
Teachers	7	33	57

Question: Thinking about the future, would you like to see...?



Note: In 1986, the first time this question was asked, 26 percent wanted the federal government to have more influence, and 53 percent less influence.
Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for Phi Delta Kappa, June 2000.

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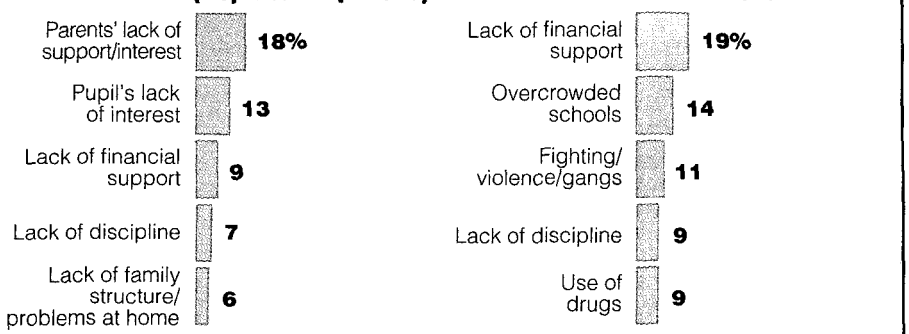
Parents and Teachers

Teachers feel the biggest problem in their schools is lack of interest and support from parents. Parents say the schools don't have enough financial support and that they are overcrowded. Parents are more receptive to school choice than teachers. When it comes to curriculum and standards, however, teachers and parents are in agreement. Few parents feel very comfortable making major decisions about their schools. Not surprisingly, teachers balk at their involvement, too.

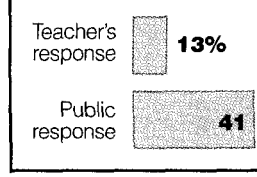
Question: What do you think are the...?

Biggest problems with which the public schools of this community must deal



Question: Do you favor...?

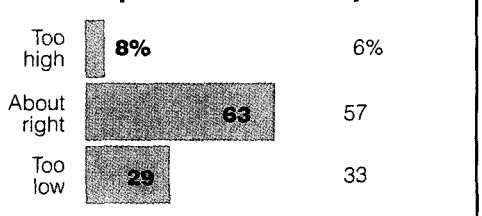
Favor allowing students and parents to choose a private school at public expense



Source: Survey by the Gallup Organization for Phi Delta Kappa, June 2000.

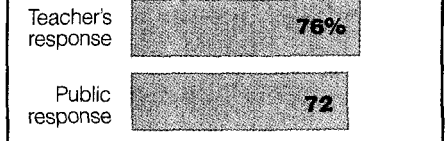
Question: In your opinion...?

Student achievement standards in the public schools in your community are



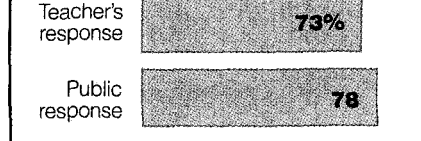
Question: Social promotion means moving children from grade to grade in order to keep them with others in their own age group. Would you ...?

Favor stricter standards for social promotion even if it meant that significantly more students would be held back

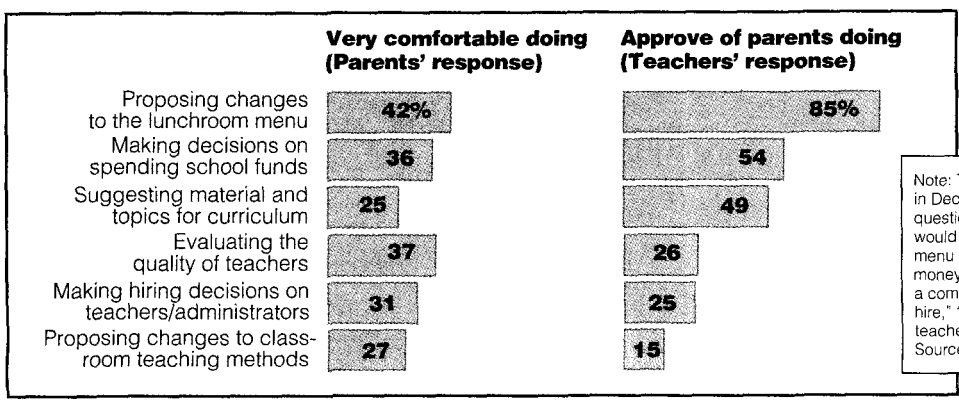


Question: As you know, many high school students are allowed to choose many of their academic courses. Would you ...?

Favor requiring high school students to take a standardized core curriculum



Question: How comfortable would you feel ...? Would you approve or disapprove of parents at your school ...?



Note: Teachers were interviewed in the fall of 1998. Parents in December 1998. The wording shown here is from the questions asked of teachers. Parents were asked if they would be comfortable "serving on a committee" to propose menu changes, "helping decide how to spend your school's money," "helping to plan the school curriculum," "serving on a committee to decide which new teachers or principals to hire," "serving on a committee to propose changing how teachers teach in their classrooms."
Source: Survey by Public Agenda, Fall 1998.

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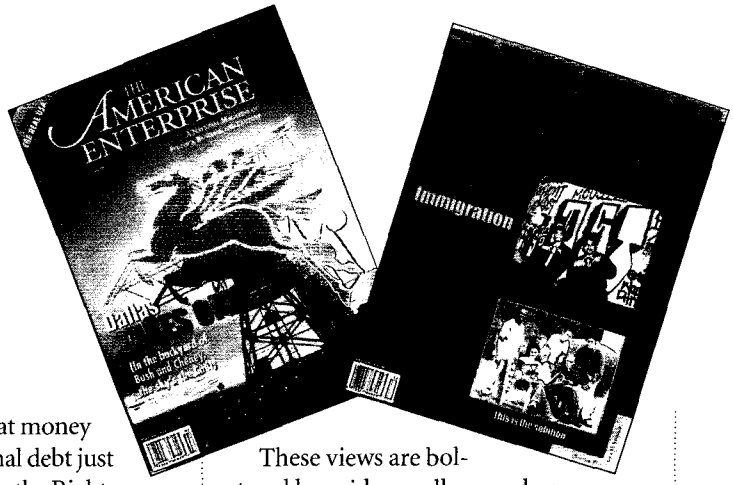
the Mail



Stephen Ambrose says the transcontinental railroad "could not have been built without government help" (LIVE, September). Someone should have told that to James J. Hill, who actually built one without a penny of government subsidies. His Great Northern line demonstrates the weaknesses of the subsidized roads celebrated by Ambrose: During the huge financial panics of the late 1800s, it was the *only* transcontinental not to go bankrupt!

Hill, working on his own dime, selected the easiest grades (lowering costs) and, assuming people traveled to get where they were going, not to sightsee, accepted nonscenic routes. Government-subsidized railroads, which were paid in land based on miles of track laid, avoided direct routes, since fewer miles meant less land. Often they designed circuitous track layouts comparable to a Six Flags rollercoaster.

The history of privatized transport is often as neglected by conservative historians—who should be singing its praises—as it is by leftists. It's understandable when Marxists tout the "necessity" of federal transportation funding, but it is mystifying to see conservatives jump on this (broken?) bandwagon.

Larry Schweikart
University of Dayton

In "End the Surplus Now" (FORWARD OBSERVER, October/November) James Glassman argues that the federal budget surpluses should be eliminated via tax reductions. He opposes using the surplus to reduce the federal debt: "To repay the debt, on which the feds pay interest of about 6 percent, Washington is sucking money out of the private sector, which could put the same dollars to work in new and expanded businesses with a return of about 10 percent. Seems like a bad bargain."

Glassman assumes that money used to pay off the national debt just "goes away." According to the Right, every dollar collected in taxes is wasted. To the Left, every dollar *not* collected is wasted by taxpayers.

Both views are nonsense. Some tax dollars *do* get wasted. Still, the government must collect taxes in order to carry out its legitimate functions. I'm proud my government provides a safety net which helps out my former neighbor, a lifelong sufferer of cerebral palsy.

Let us stop the smoke-and-mirrors arguments by which money seems to disappear. In almost all such cases the real complaint is that the money may slip beyond the grasp of some special interest group, which probably would be a good thing.

Mark Psiaki
Brooktondale, New York

We question Karl Zinsmeister's "Not All Immigrants Are Alike" (BIRD'S EYE, December). He writes that America has irrational rules for choosing immigrants, and that "we are admitting far too many immigrants without education or skills, and too few with top abilities." Relative to practically every other country the U.S. has been an immigrant society, and much of our growth can be attributed to immigrants.

We clearly need more skilled immigrants, but we need the others also. Social Security experts say we need more workers to pay taxes to support baby boomers, offsetting our declining fertility. AEI economist John Makin has frequently noted that shortages of labor will cause upward pressure on wages, leading to inflation. In November he reported he expects "slowing growth and rising labor cost pressures on inflation."

These views are bolstered by evidence all around us. The future of Social Security was a major issue in the recent election. Parents complain of shortages of childcare, and "Help Wanted" signs are visible in stores and at construction sites. Many such jobs could be filled by, in Zinsmeister's words, "foreigners whose sole qualification is that they have, say, a sister in the Bronx."

The majority of the problems your issue attributes to immigrants are those facing the U.S. as a whole. Even without low-skilled immigration, poor schooling and lack of health insurance need policy solutions. Other allegations, such as that low-skilled immigration increases poverty levels and worsens income distribution curves, are rooted more in our methods for measuring income distribution and poverty than in the immigrants.

The standard of living of the poor in the U.S. is so far above median incomes in the developing world that to keep immigrants out on the grounds that they will be poor when they arrive will not convince immigrants! In itself, a narrower income distribution is no more desirable than a wider one. What is important to immigrants (and all of us) are opportunities to move up the income ladder. The U.S. has more of those than any country in the world.

The U.S. should continue to provide as much opportunity as possible to all immigrants. Some immigrants may not do as well as others, but we cannot pick winners in advance. Just as our own families have benefitted in the past, others will continue to benefit in the future. As will the whole country.

Diana Furchtgott-Roth & Michael Novak
American Enterprise Institute

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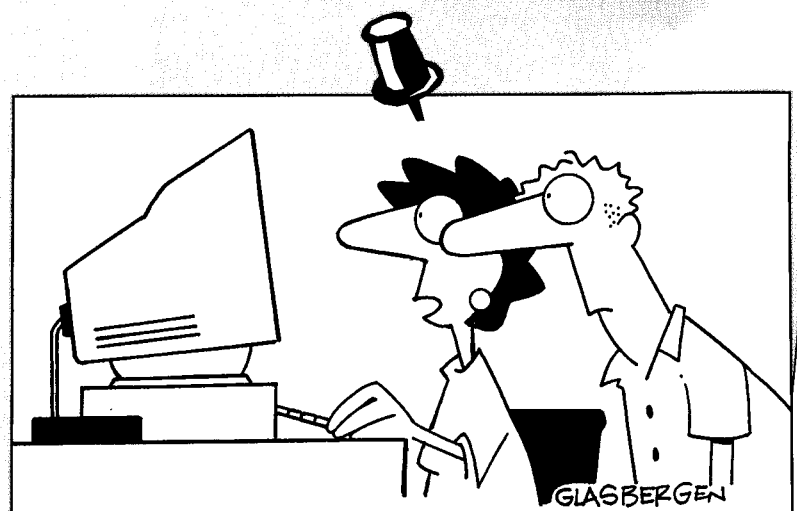
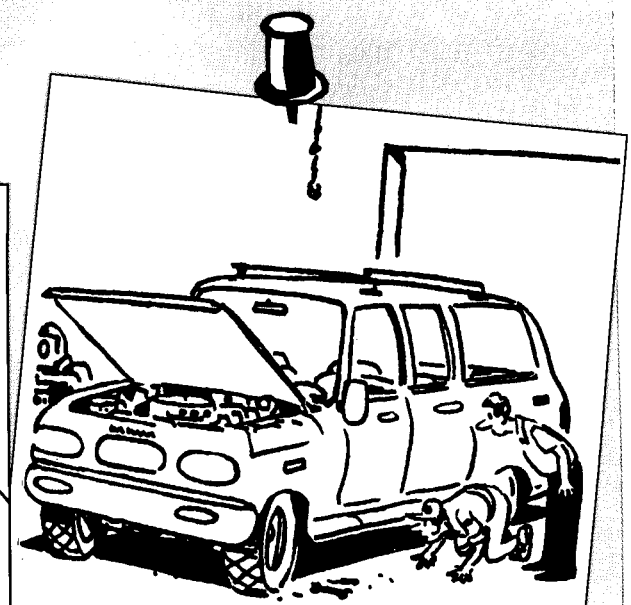


"A hacker broke into our computer, tuned up our hard drive, balanced our checkbook, updated our software and left us a bill for $200."



"Well, there's your problem... there's a little car under there."

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"I love the way you weave together the stories of your abused childhood with these delightful recipes for muffins and scones."

"Come back next Wednesday and we'll remove the duct tape."

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